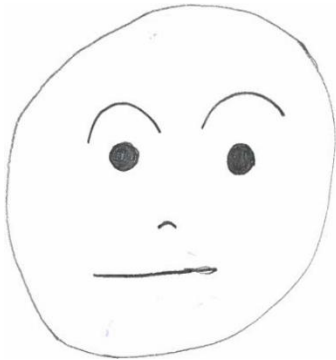
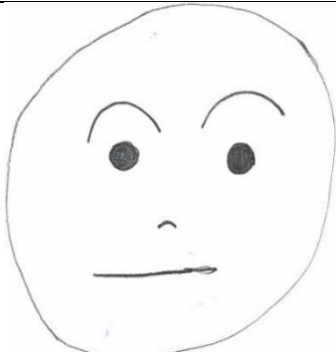


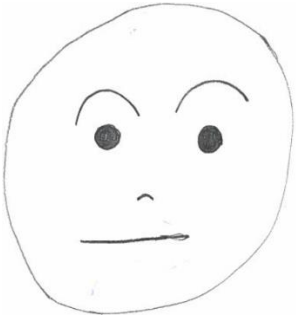
YCAO Progress Tracker Re: Review on School Attendance in the Yukon: What Is, What Could Be

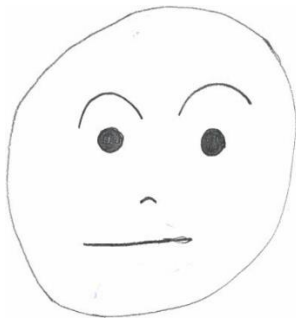
March 2025

YCAO Recommendation	YCAO Rating	Positive Actions/Outstanding Actions
Belonging, Safety, and School Culture 1. Implement Canada’s Rights Respecting Schools a UNICEF initiative that uses the UNCRC as a basis for enhancing an inclusive, participatory and respectful school culture for children and adults. 2. Incorporate the Circle of Courage model to recognize children’s unmet needs and work collaboratively with relevant YG departments, First Nations, non-government organizations to provide wrap around services for children and families. 3. Work in partnership with First Nations governments and First Nation Education Directorate to increase First Nation representation in all schools. This includes educators, assistants, Elders, counsellors, presenters, and community support programs. Incorporate cultural competencies	(1) Some Progress. Started but is not yet complete. 	The Rights Respecting Schools program through UNICEF was discontinued nationally due to a lack of resources. In hindsight, this recommendation was overly prescriptive, but YCAO holds the recommendation in principle. The intended results can be achieved by implementing child rights education in schools and applying a Childs Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) to Department of Education (EDU) policies. Child rights education and programming have not been formally implemented into schools; however, several educators have included child rights resources in their social justice curriculum and all Yukon schools have child rights posters developed by YCAO. Several EDU policy staff have attended CRIA training and sometimes participate in monthly CRIA community of practice meetings hosted by YCAO. In November 2024, YCAO facilitated child rights sessions for all classes in a FNSB primary school. EDU has implemented the Ready-to-Learn (R2L) initiative in 14 Yukon schools. R2L is based on the Neurosequential Model in Education and is aimed at ensuring children’s basic needs are met and providing an inclusive, equitable and effective learning environment. The Circle of Courage model has not been implemented by the EDU. However, EDU is promoting positive youth development through the R2L program. R2L is not yet implemented in all schools and wrap around services do not exist except through organizations such as the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate (YFNED), which is not available to all Yukon students. According to EDU’s 2023-24 annual report, the EDU has provided \$1.83M to support education priorities with First Nations, \$1.19M for language revitalization, \$2.6M for school language initiatives, and the YFNED with \$735,000 to support the Joint Education Action Plan (JEAP). The First Nation School Board (FNSB) integrates cultural activities and experiential learning. YFNED has education

and First Nations mentors into school curriculum and training of educators. 4. Build experiential learning and cultural activities and values into the curriculum and academic schedules so that it is accessible to all students in all schools. 5. Assign and honour academic credit to family or community-based learning that takes place outside of school (family time on the land, trips home, and travel). Develop curricular adaptations to ensure learning gaps will be filled. 6. Assign academic credit to pre-existing culture camps when the First Nation government is interested. 7. Provide opportunities and options for all students that address individualized learning goals, such as co-op training programs, community placements, and employment opportunities for students grades 10-12.		advocates in most Yukon schools and offers cultural programming, food programs, and a mobile therapeutic team. Furthermore, some First Nation governments have developed their Education departments to enhance supports for citizens. EDU reports that 2024 saw the highest recorded number of current and active apprentices, and over 100 positions were filled through student employment programs. EDU implemented a new Accreditation of Yukon First Nations Cultural, Language, and Traditional Knowledge Learning policy to enable Yukon First Nation governments to design, deliver, assess, and provide notice of completion for accredited cultural, language, and traditional knowledge programming for Yukon students. This policy states that Yukon government will: “affirm, honour, and promote participation in programming offered by YFN governments, Knowledge Keepers, Elders, or individuals or organizations considered qualified by a YFN government to design and deliver the programming.” A culture of systemic racism still exists in Yukon schools. In December 2023, after the Yukon Chief’s Committee on Education expressed ongoing concerns about discrimination, exclusion, and racism towards First Nations students in the K-12 school system, YCAO launched a review on systemic racism, supported by the YFNED. The results of YCAO’s review will be released in the Spring of 2025. EDU has cooperated with YCAO for this review. In 2024, the Department of Education introduced what was branded as a “new” attendance policy to recognize cultural participation. In fact, the existing 2019 attendance policy is now being implemented procedurally through attendance tracking in Aspen: <i>“The Department of Education recognizes that when a student is away from the school because they are participating in an aboriginal cultural or aboriginal harvesting activity, these activities have an educational purpose that is consistent with the delivery of the Yukon school curriculum. These absences must also be marked as Absent Authorised, in recognition of the fact that these activities are an essential part of the student’s program... All absences recorded as Absent Authorized must not be included in the number of days that a student is considered to have been absent from school on student reports, or in the calculation of student absenteeism data.”</i>
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Mental Wellness and Personal Factors 8. Standardize and implement school policies for managing prolonged absences and chronic absenteeism. Through a child rights lens, attendance policies must use collaborative processes to engage students to achieve their goals. Allocate resources identified by school-based teams and school councils. 9. Immediately create and fill full-time clinical counsellor positions in every school. These mental health counsellors must be in addition to school/guidance counsellors. All	 (1) Some Progress. Started but is not yet complete.	YCAO is not aware of any new school policies or direct initiatives that address chronic absenteeism. YCAO has presented to the Association of Yukon School Councils Boards and Committees about their role in developing attendance policies. YCAO has requested that EDU work with schools to develop family centred and culturally appropriate approaches to addressing the personal factors creating barriers to attendance. In 2024, YG contributed \$100,000 towards projects funded by the <i>Victoria Gold Yukon Student Encouragement Society’s Every Student, Every Day</i> initiative aimed at improving attendance and encouraging engagement. These projects indirectly address attendance issues by promoting belonging and creating opportunities for positive engagement in school activities. Additionally, \$500,000 was invested in youth mental health to support R2L, mental health and wellness kits, the annual Youth Summit and other related initiatives. The 2023 Confidence and Supply agreement between the Liberals and the NDP committed to creating <i>dedicated wellness counsellors or similar positions in all schools specifically dedicated to addressing the need for comprehensive mental health and wellness.</i>

counsellors must have a trauma informed lens, cultural humility, and counselling approaches that are effective in a variety of settings. They will be knowledgeable about referrals for family treatment, community support and crisis response. As part of their everyday interactions, clinical counsellors will develop relationships with students, educators, and families.		A School Wellness Specialist position was established for schools for the 2023-24 school year. There were ten proposed positions dedicated to mental wellness for schools under the purview of EDU, one for the Commission Scolaire Francophone du Yukon, and six for the First Nations School Board. In January 2025, seven of the positions have been filled and the Wellness Specialists divide their time between schools. The school administration determines the priorities for the schools. Of the positions filled, YCAO has heard generally positive feedback. In the 2024 annual report, the EDU committed to creating an integrated health and wellness model based on promotion, prevention and intervention. This is to be completed with collaboration from First Nations governments.
Behavioural Supports 10. Develop and implement alternatives to dismissal that promote safety and address problems in a way that restores relationships, promotes children's rights, and supports students in meeting their goals. 11. Implement restorative justice processes in disciplinary cases. A YFNED Education Advocate or a First Nation representative should be offered to all First Nations students and participate in a school-based team where relevant and appropriate.	(1) Some Progress. Started but is not yet complete. 	Students continue to be dismissed from school for behaviours that could be addressed restoratively in school. This is leading to disengagement from school and drop out. YCAO's individual advocacy data and systemic review of racism and discrimination finds that First Nations students are more likely to be sent home from school when issues arise. YCAO has 21 open individual advocacy issues related to Behavioural Supports (March 2025). There is still a disconnect in communication and coordination of services for children with complex behavioural needs. YCAO continues to see a high number of individual advocacy cases where elementary students are not able to attend school full time, or in some cases not at all, due to complex needs and/or a lack of an educational and behavioural supports. Representatives from EDU attended YCAO's <i>Close to Home: Supporting Children with Complex Needs</i> multi-department session held in May 2024. The session was an opportunity for decision-makers to collaborate on strategies and solutions to address complex needs cases and formed the basis for YCAO's recommendations in <i>Close to Home – A Yukon Approach to Supporting Children with Complex Needs: A Summary of Findings</i> released in February 2025. EDU reports that they have revitalized the interagency complex case committee to develop strategies

		for students who are unable to attend school or attend part-time due to complex needs. EDU reports that they have developed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Health and Social Services and a Memorandum of Understanding with Disability Services to support training for complex medical needs. The Education Appeal Tribunal which works to resolve disputes regarding special needs, student records, suspensions, and locally developed courses reportedly received six appeal requests in 2023-24 and had three cases carried over from previous years. Only one case was resolved by EDU.
Educational Supports 12. Review and integrate developmental assessments and transition plans from early learning centres at entry to Kindergarten. 13. Provide concrete steps to implement timely assessments and track the implementation of educational supports, modifications and adaptations. Interventions will include communication with parents, classroom teachers and school-based team and EDU student support consultants. Report on Inclusive and Special Education Provide a public response to the review of Inclusive Education, detailing actions EDU will	(1) Some Progress. Started but is not yet complete. 	YCAO has 13 open individual advocacy issues related to Educational Supports (March 2025). YCAO has ongoing concerns brought to our attention regarding educational programming and allocation of educational assistants. As of April 1, 2021, the Early Learning and Childcare unit is now part of EDU. Public engagement has occurred for the review of the <i>Childcare Act</i>, expected to be amended in 2025. EDU released a What we Heard document summarizing the engagement for this review. The Child Development Centre (CDC) provides early learning assessments before a child transitions to kindergarten. Parents can self-refer to the CDC, however there is no information provided on the kindergarten registration website regarding referrals to the CDC or assessments. EDU reports that they prioritize these assessments in their considerations for educational supports. Access to Individual Learning Plans and Educational Assistants have been ongoing struggles for students (and their parents). The 2023 Confidence and Supply Agreement states: <i>“The recent cancellation of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for children with special learning and neurodiverse needs will be reversed. Those IEPs that were cancelled will be reinstated within 30 days, and any future changes to policies or processes in respect of IEPs will only be made following meaningful consultation with stakeholders.”</i>

take to provide options and opportunities and necessary resources for all students to reach their learning potential. Advise YCAO of steps taken in response to the review of inclusive education and how EDU will support timely assessment, early intervention and adequate resource allocation when students “with intellectual, communicative, behavioural, physical or multiple exceptionalities” are identified.		In 2023, EDU contracted EnGauge Consulting to conduct a review about EA allocation. YCAO participated in the engagement. EDU released a report in 2024 outlining short-, medium- and long-term goals on the topics identified by the consultant. In the 2023-24 school year the EDU reports adding 13 Educational Assistant positions and 15 Learning Assistant Teacher positions, in addition to the School Wellness Specialists. Though many positions have been created, EDU continues to have difficulty filling and retaining these positions and schools have struggled with ineffective allocations of resources. Furthermore, EDU has not implemented a new allocation system. In August 2024, EDU provided allocations to schools based on the previous school year’s staffing numbers. The Confidence and Supply Agreement adds the commitment to <i>provide, complete, and deliver the final report for psychoeducational assessments necessary to obtain an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) within six months of referrals from teachers, administrators or physicians. If the Government is unable to provide the assessment directly within this timeframe, it shall cover expenses incurred by parents to obtain the assessment externally.</i> The Department of Education has committed to providing psychoeducational assessments within six months of being referred to Student Support Services. EDU has prioritized addressing a backlog of assessments and YFNED also conducts assessment through the mobile therapeutic team. There has been a significant reduction in the number of issues referred to YCAO where a child has not received a timely assessment. In response to the 2019 report from the Office of the Auditor General, EDU contracted Nikki Yee to conduct a review of Inclusive and Special Education. In June 2021, EDU released the report in a ceremonial gathering. EDU presented their response to the OAG report to Public Accounts committee. EDU has developed and staffed a new unit in EDU central administration called Reimagining Inclusive and Special Education (RISE) to analyze and address the recommended actions. EDU, the First Nation Education Commission and the Advisory Committee on Yukon Education jointly developed eight Communities of Inquiry to work on addressing the recommendations from the YCAO
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		Review on School Attendance and the independent Review of Inclusive and Special Education. According to the 2023-24 EDU annual report, six out of seven committees have concluded, and next steps will be provided for 2024-25. This is concerning as there are outstanding issues as outlined in this progress tracker which need to be addressed. Further, the RISE website identifies eight Communities of Inquiry, and the annual report refers to seven. Neither source lists what the Communities of Inquiry are or why there is a discrepancy in these numbers. The RISE website has not been kept up to date. According to the website the 'check' phase of the Spiral of Inquiry was expected to span July 2022-July 2024. In 2022, the Department also had a blog that was dedicated to inclusive and special education – this website is no longer active.
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