

Increase Student Education Outcomes

Mr. Speaker, it is a mandate of this government to increase our education outcomes to the same level as the rest of Canada, and we have taken a number of steps to advance this goal.

This month we began trialling an adapted version of British Columbia's curriculum. It will be fully implemented in all our schools over the next five years. This partnership has been years in the making and I am pleased to see it come to fruition.

British Columbia is one of the top performers in education among all the provinces. This modern curriculum focuses on deeper learning. Students will develop skills like problem solving, researching, leadership, communicating and public speaking. These are skills that will prepare them for the rest of their lives.

Mr. Speaker, we have also expanded education programs across the territory. In the life of this Legislative Assembly, the Career and Education Advisor program expanded to every region. This resource encourages Grade 9 to 12 students to start thinking about what is next after high school. But Mr. Speaker, it is much more than asking "what do you want to be when you grow up?".

Advisors work with students to explore their skills and interests; they connect students with people who are doing work that interests them, and with learning opportunities they can take part in while they are still in school.

The Schools North Apprenticeship Program which provides high school students with work experience in the trades while finishing school, is one example. This program has grown from having no student participants in 2016, to 22 in 2022.

Mr. Speaker, Northern Distance Learning has also expanded every year since its pilot. Twenty schools are now part of the program. It allows students in small schools to take advanced high school courses online, while staying in their home community. This program helps students meet graduation requirements and allows them to apply for post-secondary schools right out of high school.

Since Junior Kindergarten was introduced territory-wide in 2017, we are seeing consistent improvement in students who attend. We hope to see these beneficial effects continue as those students get older.

Mr. Speaker, as part of our commitment to improve student outcomes, we must also identify where there are barriers and opportunities for improvement. Over the life of this Legislative Assembly, we have taken many steps to address these challenges.

We have developed a new way to calculate the graduation rate to ensure it is accurately counting all students who graduate and considers the unique realities of our communities.

We continue to release annual reports on the state of the education system, which provide crucial data to address students' needs.

This year's report includes data on unplanned school closures related to the pandemic and, beginning next year, reports will reflect all school closures, including those related to wildfires, flooding, infrastructure issues, etc.

As we have seen in recent weeks and years, unplanned school closures can have an impact on students and the education system. Monitoring these impacts will ensure we have programs and services to meet students and families' needs.

We have taken steps to address 'social passing' and clarify that the NWT does not endorse 'free passes' in education. But rather we encourage parents and students to make informed decisions, and provide supports to meet their specific strengths and needs.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we launched exciting initiatives during this Legislative Assembly to support educators' development and growth.

We introduced competency-based professional standards, which establish the knowledge, skills and values a successful educator should be able to demonstrate and transfer.

We launched CertifiED NWT, a new online system for educators to easily apply for and update their teaching certifications. We also launched ConnectEd NWT, a learning management system where educators can take professional development online to further their skills and knowledge.

We partnered with Douglas College to offer a free pilot of the Education Assistance and Inclusion Certificate to Support Assistants in the territory.

We are also seeing an increase in the number of educators here in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, this progress would not be possible without NWT education bodies, Indigenous governments, the Northwest Territories Teachers' Association, educators, families and students. We will continue this crucial work toward improving student outcomes in the Northwest Territories and supporting our students in being and becoming capable people.

Masi, Mr. Speaker.