Nunavut Education Act (K-12)

2005 Public Consultations

“Working together for our children’s future”

Contents

- Minister’s message
- Schedule of community consultations
- Vision for proposed changes to the Act
- Issues for discussion
- Making a submission
- Response form

April 2005

Baker Lake Science Camp, 2004
Dear Nunavummiut,

In 2002 a proposed Education Act ("Bill 1") was withdrawn from consideration by the Legislative Assembly, because more consultations were needed on a wide range of issues important to address in a new, made-in-Nunavut Act. The Government of Nunavut Department of Education is embarking on broad public consultation with the people of Nunavut to create a new Education Act that reflects the culture, values and principles of the people of Nunavut.

I encourage everyone to review this booklet to become informed about the variety of issues that need to be considered in creating a new Education Act. Together we can have an education system founded on teamwork between schools, parents and communities to support education and student success.

Please note the various ways you can share your ideas and opinions, including the schedule of community consultations. I encourage you to contact the Department of Education if you have questions or would like more information. Let’s take this opportunity to work together for our children’s future.

Sincerely,

Ed Picco
Minister of Education
Community Consultations

The Education Act review team will be visiting all Nunavut communities for public consultation meetings. The team will be meeting with the community District Education Authority, conducting information sessions on community radio, and holding public meetings so that everyone can express their views on the issues outlined in this booklet.

The meeting for your community will be announced on the radio and notices will be posted.

The Department hopes to finish the community consultations early in 2006, so that a new Bill can be drafted for tabling at the Legislative Assembly in the spring of 2006.

Information About Community Meetings

If you would like more information about the meeting taking place in your community, you can contact the Legislation Specialist at the Department of Education, at the address below:

Education Act (K-12) Review
Department of Education
P.O. Box 1000, Station 900
Iqaluit NU X0A 0H0

Phone: 867-975-5600
Fax: 867-975-5605
Email: educationact@gov.nu.ca

Call collect from outside Iqaluit
Vision for the Education Act

Our vision is to create an education system founded on a blend of contemporary approaches with traditional Inuit culture, including values, world view, language, social organization, knowledge, life skills, perceptions and expectations.

Our education system will be built within the context of guiding principles that are rooted in Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit.

The Education Act for Nunavut will guide all parties in the delivery of Kindergarten to Grade 12 education across Nunavut. The Early Childhood Education Strategy, K to 12 education system, and Adult Learning Strategy should reflect a seamless approach to the delivery of educational services in Nunavut.

This new Act will provide for more clarity in the various roles and functions of students, parents, teachers, Education Department officials, and District Education Authority members.

The shift is to a community-based, process-oriented, student-centered, Inuit-specific education system, with the role of the District Education Authorities substantially enhanced.

The Education Act is a comprehensive piece of legislation that has already created debate and discussion by the general public and interested parties. The objective of these public consultations is to fully inform Nunavummiut about legislation that will play a significant role in your lives as residents and students, and to expand and extend an already wide consultation process regarding the proposed legislation.

In accordance with the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (NLCA) and a wide range of policies and issues that affect Inuit, particularly issues related to culture and languages, the Government of Nunavut and NTI will have a Steering Committee to consider the results of these public consultations and develop a new Education Act to be presented to the Legislature. The Steering Committee also includes representatives of the school system, the teachers, language and culture groups, elders, and Nunavut municipalities.

The Department has also established regional working groups that will report to the Steering Committee, with members from Regional Inuit Associations & their youth groups, DEAs & the Commission scolaire francophone du Nunavut, and RSOs.

Because a lot of work has already been done in the development of the Education Bill, the Steering Committee will start working from the previous draft, as that work should not be ignored. Concerns brought up in previous consultations will be addressed in the new draft.
Issue: The Role of Inuit Qaujimajatunqangit in Education

Background:

Nunavut needs a new Education Act that reflects a Nunavut solution to education issues. Wherever possible, programs and services should be built and implemented on the principles of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. These principles, outlined below, anchor our collective approach:

**Inuuqatigiitsiarniq**: Respecting others and relationships and extending human dignity.

Respect for others and treating others equally is a characteristic the elders have always stressed in their words of advice (*uqaujjuusiat*). We have to teach respect of others within our education system. We need the help of community members and DEA members to promote this relationship with others. The Education Act will need to empower the community people to take on more responsibility with our Education system.

**Tunnganarniq**: Fostering good spirit by being open, welcoming and inclusive.

Our schools need to be welcoming and friendly to the families and parents. Parents should feel part of the education system. We need to orient our new teachers and staff to create this atmosphere within our schools. We need to provide inclusive schooling for special needs students, both high and low-performing or with special physical requirements. Inuit culture and languages are central to the school program and encouraged for the students within our schools.

**Pijitsirniq**: Serving and providing for family and/or community.

Community service and public service should be at the root of programs and services within our Education systems. This Education Act should promote teachers to teach programs at the best of their abilities, while promoting a sense of social responsibility.

**Aajiiqatigiinniq**: Decision-making through discussion and consensus.

The schools in Nunavut should have good communication tools and communication activities for the community and parents, in order to promote and develop a support system with the parents. Contributions will be sought and decisions made by acting on information from individuals and stakeholders, received through face-to-face meetings, by direct communication, and through consensus development for such issues as Codes of Conduct and activities within the schools that might need the support of the community. Decisions regarding students need to be clearly communicated.

**Piliriqatigiinniq/Ikajuqtigiinniq**: Working together for a common cause.

Parents and elders of the community should strive towards working together with the School staff and also the DEA. The teachers need to feel supported and have a mutual understanding with community members, parents and DEA to promote a healthy learning environment for all students.

(cont.)
**Issue: The Role of Inuit Qaujimajatunqangit in Education**

**Pilimmaksarniq/Pijariuqsarniq:** Development of skills through observation, practice, effort and action. The new Education Act needs to make room for all kinds of cultural activities and other activities such as sewing, hunting skills, survival skills, small engine repair, music, drama, and art work, traditional or contemporary. Job shadowing within the different jobs in the community needs to be encouraged. The learning or teaching style of Inuit was often through observation and practice; therefore we need to make sure our school system uses this methodology for teaching. The Education Act needs to provide for all learning to be valued and supported and confirm that learning can take place in many ways.

**Qanuqtuurniq:** Being innovative and resourceful in seeking solutions.

Innovation and resourcefulness are the basis of the Inuit way of life. The Education staff need to recognize the creative capacity of our communities. We can use the expertise from the community members for the areas of Culture and Language instruction. There are so many Elders and parents who can provide advice to the school in terms of programming that the staff need to explore. The DEA and school staff need to explore flexibility and openness in the development of solutions and policy for a best practices within the school.

**Avatittinnik Kamatsiarniq:** Respect and care for the land, animals and environments (social, physical, psychological).

This is a strong Inuit societal value that has sustained Inuit for generations and is just as important today. A key element contained within this value is the need for informed awareness of all aspects of the community and its related learning environments. An awareness and understanding of community capacity and ability to engage is critical to long-term success. The Education system also needs to promote awareness of taking care of and respecting school facilities, for a good learning environment for all students.

**Ilippallianginnarniq:** Continuing learning.

We believe that it is only by returning to the principles of lifelong learning that Nunavummiut can reach their full potential. We must be engaged and be involved, learning from each other and our Elders, and continually sharing our learning and knowledge.

**Questions:**

- What specific steps can we take to incorporate these values into the school system?
- Who should be teaching the students about behaviour in our schools?
- What awareness programs should be incorporated within our school system?
- What communication system should be in place so that the community, parents and school have a good understanding of each other at all times?
- How can parents, elders and teachers work together for a better school system and a healthy learning environment within their communities?
- What types of solutions to common problems such as bullying, lateness, etc., would you recommend for our school systems in Nunavut?
**Issue: Language and Culture**

**Background:**

An important issue is promoting and supporting Inuit culture and language within the Act. In previous consultations, many representatives of communities and organizations expressed concern that Inuit languages did not appear to have equal status to English or French in the current draft of the Act, since English and French are the official languages of the rest of Canada. Some felt that the previous Bill treated English as the majority language of Nunavut. They have expressed the desire not only to have legislation recognize Inuit languages as having equal standing as English and French within Nunavut, but to establish Inuit languages as the primary languages of education.

As well, the Government of Nunavut has put forward in Pinasuaqtavut, the Bathurst Mandate, a goal of having Inuktitut as a working language for the government by 2020. In order to have employees who are strong in using the Inuit languages, these languages have to be taught and supported from the earliest school days onward.

Since 2002, the Department of Education has done extensive research on bilingual education and has developed a policy with three models of language instruction. Nunavummiut can have choices in the language of instruction for their children, whether Inuktitut, Inuinnaqtun, English or French, and these choices need to be made clear for everyone.

**Questions:**

- How can the school system foster more Inuit language speakers?
- What language options do you want your children to have in school?
- Who should be involved in developing schooling materials incorporating Inuit culture (Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun curriculum development)? Does the Department of Education need partners in this area?
- How do we attract more Inuit teachers and support and enhance their language skills in teaching Inuit languages?
Issue: The role of DEAs & community empowerment

Background:

The roles and responsibilities of the Department and the District Education Authorities need to be made clear. In its simplest terms, a District Education Authority has a major responsibility to work with the principal and school staff to ensure the education environment in each school promotes a positive learning atmosphere that reflects the cultural and linguistic realities of each community and supports educational excellence. Several District Education Authorities felt that their involvement in education within their communities would be greatly reduced by the proposed Bill previously tabled in the Legislative Assembly. Others were concerned that the DEAs had increased responsibility, but not increased support to go with that.

Our consultations will address the areas where the District Education Authorities can have a major impact on the delivery of services at the community level and explain the partnership that exists between the Minister, the Department and each community. District Education Authorities are a critical element for schools. They provide a valuable service for the delivery of education at the local level, and provide guidance to the professional educators who work at the community level, particularly in relation to how schools should reflect the community’s culture and principles.

Questions:

- Do you think the DEA should have a role in determining, controlling or influencing what types of programs should be taught in school (local programming, land programs, academic programs, etc.)?
- What decisions should the DEA be able to make regarding the school year (hours, days of attendance etc)?
- Should DEAs be responsible for development of local school codes of conduct for students?
- What jurisdiction should the DEA have over staff and staffing? Academic teachers are contracted to the Department as GN employees; what about local program instructors, language teachers, elders, etc.?
- What role should the DEA play in the selection or performance development of teachers?
- Do you think elections of DEAs should be staggered? (there has been a concern that sometimes there’s a high turnover of DEA members every time there’s an election)
Issue: The role of the Minister and Department of Education

Background:

The need for clarity between the roles and responsibilities of the Minister, the Department of Education and the District Education Authorities (DEAs) is a concern brought up by many people in previous consultations.

More power has already been moved to the Minister of Education with the dissolution of the Divisional Boards/Regional Education Councils in 2000.

When the Government decided to dissolve the education Boards, there was an expectation that the Minister would now be closer to the local DEA’s, but some communities have complained that this has not happened yet. There seems to be a confusion as to what authorities the DEAs have after the dissolution of the Divisional Boards, especially compared to the roles and relationships of the Minister, Department of Education staff, and the Executive Directors.

There also need to be ongoing training programs for the DEA members about their roles in the education of students in Nunavut.

As well, the Department of Education needs to develop closer communication with the communities and their DEAs, as many Nunavummiut are not aware of developments and progress that have been made by the Department towards reaching educational goals such as bilingual education.

Questions:

- What steps can be taken to improve communications between the DEAs and the Minister's office?
- How should the reporting structure work with the Executive Directors?
- What should the Department of Education be doing to improve communications with the DEAs and their communities to promote educational programs and initiatives, teaching materials, etc. (e.g. visits, radio programs, websites)?
Issue: Role and Responsibilities of Parents

Background:
When schools were established in Nunavut, parents were not consulted about the ways they always used to educate their children or about the hopes they had for their children's learning. Much of the formal education took place away from families in residential schools. Even in communities where there were schools, the voices of parents were not encouraged, the language of the families was not used and school were very foreign and frightening places for both the parents and students. It has seemed to some Elders that Education took all the responsibilities and roles of parents. Parents often did not have much say in their children's school program, and did not feel consulted about discipline issues such as suspensions or re-admission to school.

With the formation of District Education Authorities, parents have gradually been able to have more input into the education system. We need a school system that will instill parents' beliefs and values and create a school that is not foreign to the parents. We also need to encourage support systems that will help parents keep their children in school.

The previous Bill contained several items on the responsibilities of parents that created a lot of debate. For example there were provisions for fines for people who don't send their children to school. Some felt this was not an Inuit way of dealing with the problem, but others thought it should be kept as a last resort.

Changes were also proposed for student registration and age of schooling, for the age at which children should start and how long they could be required by law to stay in school. Currently, children by law must be in school from ages 6 to 16, unless they have graduated.

Questions:

- At what age should children be expected to attend school? What role should early childhood education or daycare play in helping children to be ready for school?
- How long should they be required to stay in school?
- How can parents be involved in their children's program development?
- How should schools handle student suspensions & consultation with parents? Are there alternatives?
- What role do parents have in student behaviour & developing school codes of conduct?
- How should the school and DEA deal with parents who do not send their children to school? Are there alternatives to penalties or fines?
- What can the community and school do to support parents and encourage them to make sure their children come to school? Are incentives needed?
Issue: The Types of Programs Offered in the Schools

Background:

Many people were concerned that the previous draft legislation did not account for the types of programs Nunavummiut may wish for their children. Some have recommended that culture-based school programs should be specifically provided for in the Act. Others feel the whole school program should reflect Inuit culture. There may be a need to teach such traditional skills as hunting, sewing, survival on the land, Inuit history, traditional medicine, Inuit languages and terminology in the schools, not just at home. Some feel that religious instruction supports the learning of Inuit language and promotes certain values, and that there might be a role for this kind of instruction in schools.

Another concern for the future is the development of the skills students will need to succeed in many areas of employment, not just academic skills. Nunavut will be needing skilled tradespersons and business people as well as government employees and administrators. Some people feel that efforts should be made to encourage students to pursue these kinds of skills, without restricting their access to higher academic opportunities. The Department is currently working on multiple graduation options, so that not all students would necessarily have to finish an academic Grade 12 to graduate.

A major concern is also retaining students in school, so that they will not drop out early. Often programs such as music, arts and crafts, theatre, and physical education keep students interested and enthusiastic about school. Not all schools can currently offer these options. Some students also may need special individual programs, either because they have special needs and require assistance, or they are not sufficiently challenged by the standard academic program.

Questions:

- What changes should the Department make to ensure Inuit culture is reflected in the standard school program? What programs should the community provide to reinforce local culture (e.g. summer camps)?
- What do we need in academic programs to provide skills for continuing schooling (post-secondary preparation)?
- Is there a need for programs to promote trade preparation or practical skills as an option (carpentry, small engine repair, electronics, sewing, nutrition, health etc)? Can this option be provided without taking away from students’ ability to follow an academic program later if they want?
- Is there a need for other choices to encourage student interest, promote staying in school (e.g. athletics, art, music)? Should this be local or Departmental programming?
- Should schooling be inclusive, with development of individual programs for special needs students, both high and low-performing? Should children who are exceptionally bright or talented have a right to individual programs, as well as children with special needs or challenges?
- What is the role of spirituality in school programs? Should it be authorized or not? If it is, should it be local programming or Departmental?
Issue: Ensuring the Quality of Education

Background:
Many parents worry that if they leave their home community, their children may have difficulty coping with the schooling standards in other parts of Nunavut, Canada or the world. As well, some people feel that a grade 12 diploma from a Nunavut school may not be enough preparation for going to college or university. One of the main responsibilities of the Minister of Education is ensuring that Nunavut elementary and secondary schooling is equivalent to the rest of the country’s. How should these standards be set and maintained across all communities?

One method of maintaining school standards is to have regular testing of some kind, but there is a lot of disagreement as to whether standardized testing is appropriate in our cultural context. The Department could set up standardized testing as a Nunavut-wide requirement, or make it optional on the decision of the DEA. Some feel that benchmarked testing, which compares students to a standard established within the territory for expectations for each grade, might be more appropriate than the kind of standardized tests used for places like Alberta. Others feel that testing-based education means that teachers “teach to the test” rather than educating children as a whole, and that this will take away from teachers’ flexibility to teach what their students specifically need.

Many people have also expressed concern about the practice of “peer promotion”—allowing children who have not reached the normal standard of work for their grade to be passed up into the next grade, in order to keep them with other children in the same age group. Such children stay with their friends, but often have increasing difficulty with each grade and cannot cope with the schoolwork, leading eventually to dropping out or failing.

Questions:
• Should the Department be establishing Nunavut-wide standards for progress, graduation? What steps can the Department take to ensure these standards would be met in all communities?
• What is the role of testing and evaluation in the education system?
• What methods of testing and evaluation should be used, if any? E.g. Standardized? Benchmarked? Mandatory or optional? Grading systems?
• How can communities contribute to the development of standards within the curriculum?
• Do you think the Nunavut education system is comparable to other Canadian systems?
• How can we ensure Nunavut students are equipped for higher education (College, University) if desired?
• What access should parents and students have to student records for review or correction?
• Is there a need for school program reviews?
Background:
Ideally, the education system should provide a support network for students, to help them with their studies and staying in school. Many students have difficulty behaving in an appropriate manner at school, and disrupt classes with disrespect for the teachers and the other students. This usually leads to some form of discipline: discussion with the principal, discussion with parents, and often, eventually, suspension from school.

However, suspension also causes its own problems—what to do with suspended students who are not in class, how to get them back into the classroom successfully, how to involve their family with correcting the problem. There needs to be cooperation and consultation among the various people responsible for student discipline: parents, school staff and principals, the DEA. How can this best be achieved? Should the legislation lay out specific penalties and procedures for handling such cases?

Students also need other forms of support, particularly as they move through high school, both in their personal lives and as they prepare for their lives as adults. Some people feel that it should be mandatory to have school counsellors and career counsellors in every school, which is not currently the case. Students may also need extra support if they want to come back after being out of school for some time, especially if they are young parents themselves or have had problems with the school system, the law, or their personal lives.

Questions:
- How should the school, DEA and parents deal with students who do not follow their school’s code of conduct?
- What other methods of discipline could be used instead of suspension?
- What kind of follow-up should there be after suspensions are finished?
- Should students be involved in the developing of the school’s code of conduct? What incentives can schools & DEAs use to help students follow the code?
- Should there be support groups for parents and elders, to help them help and support their children?
- Should all schools provide student counselors, career counseling, or both?
- What other supports do students require to help them keep motivated and stay in school?
Issue: Encouraging a Committed Teaching Staff

Background:

Although the number of teachers who are raised and trained in Nunavut is steadily increasing, there are still not enough Nunavummiut with the qualifications necessary for teaching in schools, particularly in the higher grades. Many teachers therefore come to Nunavut from other parts of Canada. For most of these teachers, this is their first encounter with Inuit and Inuit culture. In previous consultations, many people felt that there should be some kind of mandatory training or orientation for new teachers, to introduce them to Inuit culture and values and to increase their sensitivity to issues that affect Inuit.

For those teachers who do come from Nunavut, there is a lot of stress because of their importance to the system. Many suffer from burnout fairly early in their careers, and have trouble coping with ongoing issues of discipline, development of Inuktitut curriculum, support from students' families, etc. Since Nunavut teachers are very well-educated, they can often turn easily from teaching to jobs with the government or other organizations, making it difficult to keep them in the schools where they are needed.

All teachers also have the stress of dealing daily with children who have educational or emotional difficulties, and who often do not want to be in school. Many times, the teachers feel they do not receive respect or support from the students' families or the DEA. Teachers can even be threatened by parents, because of their children's behaviour.

The formal requirements to be a full-time classroom teacher, in terms of education and training, are established in the legislation. However, many other people are often brought in to help in the schools with special programs, such as Inuktitut language or traditional land skills. Should these people also have to meet any kind of formal requirements, or can these standards be set by the local DEA? Should there be special training or workshops established by the Department for these kinds of teachers?

Questions:

- Should all teachers be required to have orientation, attend cultural awareness programs, etc.?
- How can communication and relations be improved between the community and teaching staff and other instructors, so that school staff feel supported and encouraged by the community?
- How can we improve communication between parents and teachers, and avoid confrontation? How can we promote a healthy, safe learning environment for everyone?
- What qualifications should be established for language and local program instructors? Who should determine these qualifications?
- How can the education system enhance the skills of Inuktitut/Inuinnaqtun program teachers?
Making a Submission or Presentation

If you would like to make a formal submission or presentation to the Department of Education on any of these issues, there are some basic requirements.

- For individuals, an E-mail submission must include name, phone number and postal code so we can verify it. Hard copy (mailed) submissions must be signed.
- If the submission is from an organization, it will have to include the signatory’s position, and at what level the submission was authorized. Hard copy submissions must be signed.

You can contact the Legislation Specialist at the address below for more information.

You can also complete the response form on the next page and mail it to the Department.

If you would like more information on subjects relating to the new Education Act, including copies of the current draft, you can fill out the request form below and mail or fax it to the Department.

Or you can telephone 867-975-5600—Please call collect from outside Iqaluit.

Or e-mail us at educationact@gov.nu.ca.

Or visit our website at www.gov.nu.ca/education/educationactreview

I would like more information about:

- How to make a submission or presentation
- The role of parents in the education of children
- The principles of education in Nunavut
- Culture and language in education
- Student behaviour and student support
- DEA roles and responsibilities
- The current draft of the bill in plain language

Name: ____________________________________________________
Address: __________________________________________________
Telephone: __________________ E-mail: _________________________

Education Act (K-12) Review
Department of Education
P.O. Box 1000, Station 900
Iqaluit NU X0A 0H0
Phone: 867-975-5600
Fax: 867-975-5605
Email: educationact@gov.nu.ca
Call collect from outside Iqaluit
Response Form

I am a: O Parent  O Elder  O Student  O Citizen  O Educator

What I would like to see in the Education Act:

Reason:

What I would not like to see in the Education Act:

Reason:

Name: ___________________________ Signature: ___________________________

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