

Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut—2019

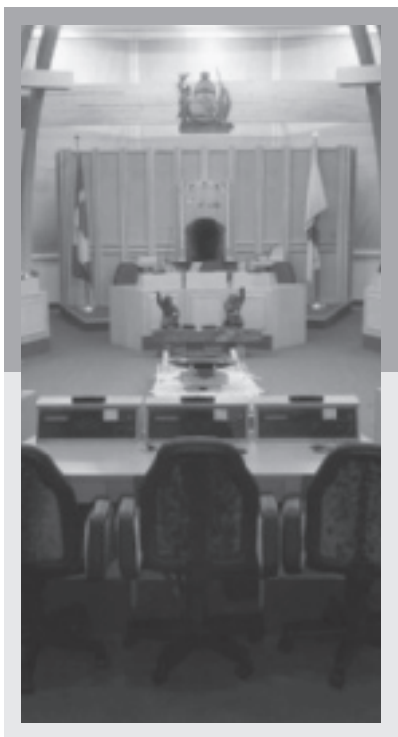
Independent Auditor's Report

Support for High School Students and Adult Learners



Office of the
Auditor General
of Canada

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To the Honourable Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut:

I have the honour to submit herewith my report Support for High School Students and Adult Learners to the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut in accordance with the provisions of section 48 of the *Nunavut Act*.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Ricard'.

Sylvain Ricard, CPA, CA
Interim Auditor General of Canada

OTTAWA, 4 June 2019

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Introduction

Background

Education and employment

1. The Government of Nunavut has made it a priority to provide education and training that prepare children, youth, and adult learners for positive contributions to society and for meaningful employment. For the government, providing good education and training opportunities is key to a healthy, strong, and flourishing Nunavut.
2. At the start of the 2018–2019 school year, there were almost 2,800 high school students (grades 10 to 12) in Nunavut. Preparing them academically and providing them with guidance and support, along with hands-on learning experiences, can help them successfully transition through school to post-secondary education or the workforce. Access to adult education programs is important for adult learners who want to further their education. These can include individuals who want to upgrade their academic and literacy skills, get their high school diplomas, or pursue post-secondary education.
3. In addition to building a healthy and strong Nunavut, increasing the number of Inuit with high school diplomas or post-secondary education would help the Government of Nunavut meet its obligations under the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement. Under Article 23 of the agreement, the Government of Nunavut is required to increase Inuit participation in government employment to a representative level of 85%. As of 30 September 2018, Inuit made up about 50% of the Government of Nunavut's 3,500 employees; almost 1,500 additional positions were vacant. Typically, these vacant positions required at least a high school diploma or some form of post-secondary education. Increasing the number of Inuit with high school diplomas or post-secondary education would increase the number of Inuit candidates for these jobs, and for other jobs in the public and private sectors.

Roles and responsibilities

4. **Department of Education.** The Department of Education is responsible for programs and services that support early childhood education and the Kindergarten to Grade 12 school system. The Department is also responsible for guiding the development of governance, policy, and strategic planning for adult learning in the territory. This responsibility includes programs that support equality of opportunity and encourage adult literacy, numeracy, and essential employability skills. The Department's vision is to have more well-educated and self-reliant Nunavummiut, high school graduation rates that are on par with the rest of Canada, and a majority of Nunavut youth graduating from high school, college, or university, with the same level of skills and abilities as graduates from anywhere in Canada.

5. The Department operates 44 schools across Nunavut, with high school offered in all 25 communities. Its budget for the 2018–19 fiscal year was \$213 million. In the 2018–2019 school year, 10,814 students were enrolled in school. The Department works with locally elected district education authorities to administer schools and oversee aspects of school programs.
6. **Nunavut Arctic College.** The only post-secondary institution in Nunavut, the College offers a variety of college- and university-level certificate, diploma, and degree programs and adult basic education and job-readiness programs. It also offers college preparatory programs for individuals who lack the academic requirements to be accepted into the college's post-secondary programs, such as nursing, teaching, and environmental technologies. The College's programs are offered through campuses in Iqaluit, Rankin Inlet, and Cambridge Bay, and through community learning centres across Nunavut. The College also has an Inuit Cultural Learning Facility (Piqqusilirivvik) in Clyde River, with programs offered in Baker Lake and Igloolik. It also runs the Nunavut Innovation and Research Institute in Iqaluit, with programs offered in Pond Inlet.
7. **Department of Family Services.** The Department of Family Services manages and delivers the territory's financial aid programs for adult learners:
- Financial Assistance for Nunavut Students (FANS), which provides grants, loans, and scholarships to students enrolled in post-secondary education; and
 - Adult Learning and Training Supports (ALTS), which provides grants to learners taking non-post-secondary employment training programs.

Focus of the audit

8. This audit focused on whether the Department of Education, Nunavut Arctic College, and the Department of Family Services adequately supported youth and adult learners' transition from high school to post-secondary education and employment.
9. This audit is important because education is important to the well-being of individuals and Nunavut as a whole. Well-educated citizens are more likely to be productive, healthy, participating members of society and communities. Citizens whose education is limited face fewer opportunities for jobs and civic participation. As a result, it is critical that the education system work well for all students, including high school students and adult learners who want to further their education.

10. At the time of our audit, the Government of Nunavut was reviewing the *Education Act*. We did not audit the review process or areas where legislative changes may be possible. We also did not examine training programs funded by the federal government or activities of district education authorities.

11. More details about the audit objective, scope, approach, and criteria are in **About the Audit** at the end of this report (see pages 26 to 29).

Findings, Recommendations, and Responses

Overall message



12. Overall, we found that Nunavut's education system had a number of gaps and barriers that made it difficult for high school students and adult learners to succeed academically and transition to post-secondary education and employment. Many high school students needed more than one year to complete a grade, which extended the time required to complete high school, with many leaving school before graduating. Addressing the challenges faced by high school students requires contributions from many stakeholders. However, we found that the Department of Education did not have a strategy that outlined actions it and other partners could take to help students graduate and transition from high school to post-secondary education and employment. Furthermore, despite difficulties hiring and keeping staff, the Department did not have a recruitment and retention strategy to address its human resource needs.

13. Only two of the seven high schools we examined had teachers assigned to help students navigate the challenging path to post-secondary education and employment. Students were being offered hands-on learning experiences, but few had work placements or cooperative opportunities that could be used to expose them to workplaces and occupations. Moreover, the territory's sole post-secondary institution, Nunavut Arctic College, undertook only limited outreach to inform high school students of its programs, and program information on its website was out of date.

14. We also found that adult learners who wanted to upgrade their literacy and other academic skills faced barriers. For example, to enrol in the territory's online adult high school diploma program, learners needed to have minimum literacy skills, which more than one third of applicants lacked. Yet the adult basic education program that allowed adult learners to improve their literacy skills and become eligible for the online diploma program was not offered in most Nunavut communities in the past five years.

15. According to Nunavut Arctic College, many applicants required academic upgrading to be eligible for its programs. We found that the College offered preparatory programs, but because of funding constraints,

it could offer them in only a few communities. As a result, many adult learners would have to leave their communities to access these programs. Access to the territory's financial aid programs for selected adult learners was limited. For example, financial aid was not available to adult learners taking part-time programs, adults taking high school courses, and learners taking most adult basic education courses. This limited access to financial aid could be a barrier for adult learners who wish to further their education.

High school students

The Department of Education did not prepare students for post-secondary education or employment

What we found

16. We found that the Department of Education was not doing enough to prepare students academically for post-secondary education or employment. Despite low graduation rates and many students leaving high school before graduating, we found that the Department did not have a strategy to help students graduate and transition from high school to post-secondary education or employment. Furthermore, the Department did not have a strategy to recruit and retain teachers, principals, and other key staff.
17. We found that aspects of the Department of Education high school curriculum related to career planning and development were not implemented consistently. While all of the seven schools we examined offered hands-on learning to students, only four schools had students prepare required career and program plans that were meant to help guide students through high school. We also found that Nunavut Arctic College's efforts to inform students about its programs were limited.
18. Our analysis supporting this finding presents what we examined and discusses the following topics:
 - Strategy to help students graduate and transition from high school to post-secondary education or employment
 - Strategy to recruit and retain staff
 - Student assessment
 - Advanced courses and distance learning
 - Counselling and advice on academic and career options
 - Nunavut Arctic College's school outreach
 - Hands-on learning

Why this finding matters

19. This finding matters because helping students graduate and preparing them academically are important to achieving the Department of Education's vision of having high school graduation rates on par with the rest of Canada and for most Nunavut youth to graduate from high school with the same skills and abilities as graduates from elsewhere in Canada. Providing guidance to students on academic and career paths makes them aware of their options and the importance of a high school diploma for finding a job. Assessing students tells them what their strengths are and where they need to improve and can be used to improve teaching methods. Hands-on learning exposes students to work environments and can help prepare them for the workforce. It also reflects the Inuit value *Pilimmaksarniq/Pijariuqsarniq* (developing skills through observation, mentoring, practice, and effort).

Context

20. Nunavut high school students must obtain 100 credits and pass Grade 12 English to graduate. Grade 12 English involves taking the Government of Alberta's standardized Grade 12 English exam. The final course mark is a combination of the mark assigned by the teacher based on classroom work (70%) and the mark obtained on the standardized exam (30%).

21. In our previous audit on education in Nunavut in 2013, we reported, among other things, that students' classroom marks in Grade 12 English were 26 percentage points higher than the marks they received on standardized examinations. We recommended that the Department of Education analyze these differences to identify potential areas for reducing this gap.

22. The Department of Education's curriculum for high school students includes career-related courses that provide students with hands-on learning experiences. The Department requires Grade 9 students to develop a personal career and program plan. The plan is intended to outline a student's path through school to graduation and to be updated at least once a year. Preparing the plan helps students identify which courses are most relevant to their interests, abilities, and life goals, including post-secondary education.

23. Nunavut Arctic College offers several post-secondary programs, including nursing and teaching. Increasing the number of Inuit nurses and teachers is a priority of the Government of Nunavut. Increasing high school students' awareness of these programs could encourage them to enter these occupations.

Recommendations

24. Our recommendations in this area of examination appear at paragraphs 31, 32, 38, 39, 44, 47, 52, 55, and 59.

25. **What we examined.** We examined whether the Department of Education had a strategy and policies to prepare high school students to transition to post-secondary education and employment. We examined whether students were receiving guidance and support on academic and career options, along with hands-on learning opportunities. We also examined Nunavut Arctic College's outreach to high schools.

26. **Strategy to help students graduate and transition from high school to post-secondary education or employment.** We found that the Department of Education did not have a strategy that outlined actions it and other partners could take to help students graduate and transition from high school to post-secondary education and employment. Nor did the Department have any targets or timelines to support its vision of having high school graduation rates and graduates' skills equal to those in the rest of Canada.

27. Several factors can make completing high school a challenge for Nunavummiut. Overcrowded housing, food insecurity, and the legacy of residential schools can affect students' academic performance. Furthermore, studies have shown that a high percentage of school-aged Inuit children have hearing impairments that can delay language development and impede academic success. Addressing these challenges requires action not just by the Department of Education but also by others in the community (such as other Government of Nunavut departments, local stakeholders, and parents). Adequately supporting students before they enter high school is also important to their success.

28. We found that many high school students needed more than one year to complete a grade. According to the Department of Education's data, for the three school years we examined (2015–2016 to 2017–2018), more than one third (39%) of students enrolled in grades 10, 11, or 12 had been enrolled in the same grade the year before. Of the students who enrolled in Grade 10 in the 2015–2016 school year, 22% graduated within three years (that is, by the end of the 2017–2018 school year). Of the students who enrolled in Grade 10 in the 2014–2015 school year, 29% graduated after four years. Many high school students also left school early. For example, between the 2015–2016 and 2017–2018 school years, the number of students who left grades 10, 11, or 12 before finishing their grade was 1,275 (equal to 16% of all students enrolled in these grades in that time period). Of those high school students who took more than one year to complete a grade, up to one third would leave school before finishing their grade.

29. At the time of our audit, there was one primary graduation pathway for students. School officials told us that alternative graduation pathways were needed to encourage students to stay in school. We found that the Department of Education was examining alternative diploma options that would better fit students' needs and strengths, and would better describe

what students had achieved. The Department had not set any clear direction or timelines for completing this work.

30. Teachers and principals identified low attendance at school as one of the root causes of students' academic difficulties. The Department of Education also emphasized that a student's attendance has a direct effect on their progress through high school. We found several problems with the completeness and accuracy of attendance data provided to us by the Department. Having good data on attendance is important for understanding the extent of the problem, identifying possible solutions, and determining the success of actions taken to improve attendance.

31. **Recommendation.** The Department of Education should develop and implement a strategy that specifies the actions that it and other partners will take to help students graduate from high school and transition to post-secondary education and employment.

The Department's response. Agreed. In the 2019–20 fiscal year, the Department of Education will develop a 10-year strategic plan. Strategies to help students successfully graduate and transition from high school will be included within this plan. Project planning for this began in fall 2018.

In spring 2018, the Department staffed a new position, within the Advanced Education Division. The focus of this position is to support the transition of adult learners either from high school, post-secondary education, or the labour market.

32. **Recommendation.** The Department of Education should take steps to improve the quality of attendance data.

The Department's response. Agreed. In 2012, the Department of Education began implementing the Student Information System (SIS) to standardize and improve the quality of student data that the Department can access. Data entry is generally done by school staff, with additional support provided remotely by divisional staff. The reliability and accuracy of data entry is impacted by staff vacancies and turnover.

The Department has developed and is implementing online training modules and system manuals for school office administrators, secretaries, and teachers, to ensure that all key users receive training on how to use, and enter data into, the SIS. This support helps to streamline the data-entry process and builds capacity within staff to ensure the overall quality of student data.

33. **Strategy to recruit and retain staff.** We found that the Department of Education did not have a recruitment and retention strategy to address its staffing needs and challenges, such as high turnover of teachers and principals. The Department told us that the high turnover of teachers increased principals' and teachers' workloads and affected the quality of students' education.

34. There were also vacancies in branches within the Department that were responsible for supporting schools and the Department as a whole. For example, the Department's data for the end of October 2018 showed the following:

- In the Educator Development division, 18 of 22 positions (82%) were vacant. This division's responsibilities include training school staff on the Department's directives, programs, and policies; improving teaching practices; and supporting students who need accommodations.
- In the Curriculum Development division, 12 of 21 positions (57%) were vacant. This limited the Department's capacity to develop and update the curriculum. The curriculum for many courses had not been updated for more than 10 years or to reflect the Nunavut context.

35. Department officials said that several factors affected the Department's ability to fill vacant positions, including the lack of housing, teachers and other staff not being a first priority when allocating staff housing, the need for teachers to share accommodations with others they may not know, a lengthy staffing process, and a low number of applicants for some positions.

36. To address its human resource needs, the Department commissioned two contractors in 2018 who were experienced former Department of Education employees to attend career fairs at Canadian universities to recruit teachers to work in Nunavut. The Department was also developing a new Nunavut Educator Development website and preparing a project charter to develop a long-term recruitment and retention strategy. However, the strategy focused on educators only, not other Department staff, such as those in the educator development or curriculum development divisions, and it had not identified timelines and resources for putting the strategy into action.

37. We found that the Department had a goal to increase Inuit representation within its workforce, but it did not have a strategy to encourage high school students to enrol in post-secondary programs that would lead to positions in the Department. However, it did indicate to us that it was planning communications activities aimed at encouraging students to pursue careers in education. Given that the majority of students in Nunavut are Inuit, a comprehensive strategy to promote their participation in the education workforce could help to address vacancies and turnover.

38. **Recommendation.** The Department of Education should develop and carry out a strategy to recruit and retain staff in schools and throughout the Department. The strategy should

- be based on a needs analysis,
- identify and address the conditions that discourage working as a teacher in Nunavut, and

- identify deliverables and related timelines and resources.

The Department should periodically assess the effectiveness of its strategy and take corrective action as required.

The Department's response. Agreed. In the 2019–20 fiscal year, the Department of Education will develop a 10-year teacher retention and recruitment strategy. Project planning for this strategy development began in fall 2018.

39. **Recommendation.** The Department of Education should develop specific actions to encourage students to enrol in post-secondary education programs that would lead to positions in the Department.

The Department's response. Agreed. The 10-year teacher retention and recruitment strategy being developed in the 2019–20 fiscal year will incorporate actions to encourage students to enrol in post-secondary programs that could lead to careers in the Department of Education.

The Department will assist students to explore a variety of possibilities for post-secondary training by entering into partnerships that will incorporate hands-on learning opportunities through practicums, work experience, job shadowing, and co-op learning. The Department supports Take Your Kids to Work Day.

40. **Student assessment.** We found that the Department of Education did not have finalized policies and guidelines to help teachers assess student achievement in the classroom. As a result, the Department did not have assurance that students were being assessed consistently across schools or that classroom marks were reliable. At the time of our audit, the Department had a draft assessment, evaluation, and reporting framework and related policy for Kindergarten to Grade 12 students. It was also planning to develop a handbook for teachers to help carry out the policy.

41. We found that the Department had begun assessing the literacy levels of students from Kindergarten to Grade 12. These tests were meant to help teachers determine a student's reading level, inform teaching practices, and document a student's reading progress over time.

42. In our 2013 audit, we analyzed the differences between the standardized departmental exams and classroom marks for Grade 12 English. We found that for the three school years we examined (2009–2010 to 2011–2012), the average classroom grade was 26 percentage points higher than the standardized test grades. For this audit, we again analyzed student performance on the standardized exam and compared it with the students' classroom marks from the three most recent school years (2015–2016 to 2017–2018). We found that the gap had narrowed. Classroom grades were 20 percentage points higher on average than the standardized test grades.

43. As part of this audit, we followed up with the Department on the actions it had taken in response to our 2013 recommendation that it analyze the differences between the marks obtained by students in the classroom and on the standardized exam, to identify potential areas for reducing these differences. We found that the Department had not recently analyzed this information. As a result, it did not have the information it needed to inform decisions on improvements or changes it could make to teaching and student assessment methods. In 2013, the Department developed a draft directive that outlined the steps teachers and principals could take to reduce the gap between classroom marks and standardized exam marks. However, it did not complete the directive.

44. **Recommendation.** The Department of Education should complete its policies and guidelines on student assessment and implement them. It should also complete and implement the draft directive for school staff on the steps they can take to improve student performance and to further reduce the gap between classroom marks and end-of-year standardized exams.

***The Department's response.** Agreed. The Department of Education's student assessment and reporting policy, framework, and handbook aim to provide guidelines on how to assess students for success and achieve consistency and reliability in assessment practices across Nunavut schools.*

The Department has a draft student assessment and reporting policy that is being reviewed following feedback from the Coalition of Nunavut District Education Authorities, which recommended that the Department revise the policy to further reflect Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. The Department has commenced the reviewing process and the document will be ready for the 2020–2021 school year.

The Department will continue its efforts to reduce the gap between end-of-year standardized departmental exams and classroom marks for Grade 12 English.

Recognizing the connection between a responsive, welcoming, and safe learning environment and student achievement, the Department is working toward increasing the success rates in the standardized exams through the development of a safe and caring school framework. This framework aims to create a teaching and learning environment that promotes a sense of achievement among students and educators, thus leading to higher success rates.

Over the next two years, the Department intends to have data analysis systems in place so that policy decisions are informed by data.

The Department will also initiate the review process of the School Operations Directive: Review of Marks Differential Directive (2013).

45. **Advanced courses and distance learning.** We found that many schools did not offer advanced-level courses, such as advanced physics and chemistry. Reasons for not offering these courses were factors such as a lack of teachers and the small numbers of students wanting or academically ready to take these courses. Access to such courses is important for those students who want to qualify for selected post-secondary programs.

46. The Department of Education, through the Alberta Distance Learning Centre, offered distance learning to students who wanted to take advanced courses not offered in their schools. However, we found that the Department had no directive on distance learning in place that clarified the process students, parents, principals, and district education authorities had to follow to register students in distance learning courses. The Department was working on a draft distance-learning directive that would clarify this. The Department reported on its website that it was also developing a delivery plan for distance education. It was unable to confirm who was responsible for completing this task and when it would be completed.

47. **Recommendation.** The Department of Education should complete and implement its directive and its delivery plan on distance learning.

The Department's response. Agreed. The Department of Education is finalizing the distance learning directive for students registered in Nunavut Kindergarten to Grade 12 schools for the 2019–2020 academic year. This directive clarifies the process for students, parents, principals, and district education authorities. It has simplified the process to access distance learning for parents and students.

The Department will make an effort to initiate the process of developing a delivery plan for distance learning through a collaborative process involving several divisions. The delivery plan will further support implementation.

48. **Counselling and advice on academic and career options.** We found that the Department of Education did not have formal guidance counsellor positions in its high schools. At the time of our audit, it was considering obtaining funding for these positions. Principals in two of the seven high schools we visited had assigned teachers to provide guidance and advice to students. When there was no guidance counsellor, principals, vice-principals, and teachers provided advice in addition to their regular responsibilities.

49. We found that the Department did not provide training to school staff on how to give students career advice and gave them few materials on topics such as post-secondary programs, financial assistance, and job opportunities. We also found that only four of the seven schools we visited had students prepare career and program plans. Guidance and career planning can help students ensure that they are aware of which high school courses they need to be eligible for post-secondary education

programs that interest them. Without this information, students might not take the courses they need, delaying their entry into post-secondary education.

50. In some of the schools we examined, guest speakers came to talk about their jobs. Career fairs were also available to students. The Department also participated in Connected North, a program operated by TakingITGlobal, a registered charity that uses videoconferencing to connect students with mentors, experts, and other classrooms. Twelve of Nunavut's 44 elementary and high schools have participated. There were plans to have a total of 20 schools participate by the end of the 2018–2019 school year. Skills Canada Nunavut, a non-governmental organization, also offered skills clubs and competitions to engage youth in the trade and technology sectors.

51. In 2018, the Department of Education created a three-person team responsible for career development programming and related curricula. One of the team's first tasks was to review and modify the Department's guidance and course offerings on career planning. By the end of the audit period, only the team lead position had been staffed.

52. **Recommendation.** The Department of Education should ensure that high school students are getting advice on academic and career options and that students complete career and program plans. The Department should also provide training and support materials to school staff on how to give students career advice.

***The Department's response.** Agreed. The completion of the career and program planning process is mandatory at Grade 9 and embedded into Aulajaaqtut courses at grades 10 and 11. Schools that have undergone a high staff and administrative turnover may not be following the mandate. To assist schools to better support students in career exploration, course selection, and involving parents in these life choices, the Department of Education will work with Regional School Operations administrators to ensure that school administrators and staff are aware of the career program planning process and have accounted for this in their Long Range / Year Plans to undertake this process with their students. This data will be used to inform the school's Education Program Plan (EPP).*

The Department will complete the staffing for the Curriculum Development Division Transition Team, so that initiatives such as Take Your Kids to Work Day, career fairs, and links to preparing students for a successful life after high school are available to all students.

53. **Nunavut Arctic College's school outreach.** We found that Nunavut Arctic College did not have an outreach strategy or a team dedicated to informing high school or other prospective students about its programs. Staff were responsible for promoting their own programs, but they told us that they had little time for outreach to high school students and infrequently visited schools.

54. We found several problems with the information that was publicly available about the College's programs. For example, the last program calendar with detailed information on the College's programs and admission requirements was dated 2012–2014. Furthermore, as at July 2018, information on the College's website about program offerings, schedules, and application deadlines was for the 2016–2017 school year, not 2018–2019. At the time of our audit, the College was taking steps to improve outreach. It had hired a public affairs officer and sought additional funding for a dedicated recruitment team. It was also updating its website. However, at the end of the audit period, we continued to find many examples of information on academic requirements for College programs that was unclear or inaccurate. This would make it difficult for guidance counsellors, teachers, high school students, other prospective learners, and parents to confirm admission requirements.

55. **Recommendation.** Nunavut Arctic College should inform high school students about the various academic programs it offers and ensure that it keeps information on its programs and admission requirements clear and up to date.

***The College's response.** Agreed. The Minister responsible for the Nunavut Arctic College and the Board of Governors have directed the College to see how it can begin to address these gaps. The College has recently begun to overhaul its website and has posted an updated program schedule for the 2019–2020 academic year. The maintenance of a digital presence for the purpose of communicating information with the public is an iterative process, and the College will continue to update and improve its website content for the purpose of providing current and clear information to the public. The College has received additional funding for these activities.*

During the winter sitting of the Legislative Assembly (February–March 2019), additional base funding was appropriated for the College with the express purpose of creating a marketing, communications, and recruitment team. This team will include a divisional manager, promotional materials specialist, and two strategic recruitment coordinators. This funding will be available to the College on 1 April 2019, and the College is already preparing to fill those positions as soon as possible.

The College acknowledges that, due to the size of the territory, some marketing activities will need to remain with individual faculties, divisions, or frontline staff in the communities. As such, the additional expertise of the headquarter division along with the supplemental funding for marketing materials and activities is intended to augment existing activities and help build capacity where necessary, rather than completely centralizing recruitment operations.

The College recognizes the need to inform high school students and mature learners of the academic programs being offered in both the campus communities as well as the community learning centres, and is committed to improving how it communicates and markets its programs and course offerings to Nunavummiut.

56. **Hands-on learning.** We found that all seven high schools we visited offered courses that provided students with hands-on learning experiences in the classroom or on the land. These courses included

- traditional knowledge and activities, such as building igloos and kayaks, fishing, fox trapping, wilderness navigation, outdoor survival skills, cooking on fires, and sewing; and
- entrepreneurship, sustainable tourism, Photoshop, iMovie, hairstyling, esthetics, health services, nutrition and wellness, and cooking.

57. We found that only one of the seven schools we examined offered a pre-trades program. We did note hands-on learning initiatives that other schools and communities could adopt (Exhibit 1).

Exhibit 1 Several initiatives have provided students with hands-on learning

Pre-trades program. One of the seven schools we examined, Kugluktuk High School, offered a pre-trades program. The program combines hands-on learning, such as building kayaks or furniture, with academic-level studies, including mathematics—an important skill for students who wish to enter certain trades. As part of the program, students have visited mining operations in the Northwest Territories as well as the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology in Edmonton. According to the school, almost 75% of students in the program have graduated; many pursued post-secondary education or were employed in the trades. The pre-trades program was developed as part of the Department of Education's Multiple Options initiative.

TASK week. In Baker Lake, high school students can participate in the Trades Awareness Skills and Knowledge (TASK) week. In 2018, students experienced trades such as plumbing, electrical, hairdressing, welding, mechanics, environmental testing, and culinary arts. TASK week involved Agnico Eagle Mines as well as Nunavut Arctic College. In fall 2018, students visited the local mine operated by Agnico Eagle.

Health Careers Camp. In February 2018, the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, the Qaujigiartiit Health Research Centre, and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated collaborated with the Department of Health, the Department of Education, and Nunavut Arctic College to hold a one-week Health Careers Camp pilot project in Iqaluit. About 20 Nunavut high school students participated, representing all three regions of the territory. Students were given an opportunity to learn about health careers and develop hands-on clinical skills, such as putting on casts and suturing.

58. We found that of the seven schools we examined, two had students enrolled in work experience courses during each of the last three school years (2015–2016 to 2017–2018). In the other five schools, no students or very few students were enrolled in work experience courses. None of the schools we examined had cooperative work placements. The lack of work placements was partly due to schools lacking the resources to coordinate and manage arrangements with potential employers. We noted that beginning in 2016, the Department of Family Services started a summer work-experience program for youth returning to school in the fall. In 2017 and 2018, 54 high school and post-secondary students participated in the program.

59. **Recommendation.** The Department of Education should, in collaboration with other departments and partners, increase students' access to opportunities for hands-on learning, including work placements or cooperative education options.

***The Department's response.** Agreed. The Curriculum Development Division Transition Team in the Department of Education is tasked with increasing awareness of hands-on learning opportunities to staff, students, and parents. The Transition Team will engage partners to ensure that academic and experiential learning opportunities are tied to program planning, course selection, and career pathways.*

The Transition Team and the Iqqaqqaukkaringiq Team will review the former Nunavut Early Apprenticeship Training (NEAT) program, to see whether an updated plan for high school students to begin apprenticeship training early can or should be implemented.

The Department is also considering how the Pathway to Adult Secondary School Graduation program (PASS) can incorporate work placements and cooperative education options.

Adult learners

Adult learners faced barriers to advancing their education

Context

60. In Nunavut, most Inuit adults between the ages of 25 and 64 have not completed high school. According to Statistics Canada, in 2016, of Inuit in Nunavut aged 25 to 64, approximately

- 52% had not completed high school (the Canadian average was 11%),
- 15% had completed high school but not post-secondary education (the Canadian average was 24%), and
- 33% had completed some form of post-secondary education (the Canadian average was 65%).

Moreover, according to an international assessment of adult proficiency in literacy and numeracy conducted between 2011 and 2012, 83% of Nunavummiut aged 16 to 65 had literacy levels below what is needed for most tasks in society and the workplace. It is important to note that the assessment was conducted in English or French—neither of which was the mother tongue of most of the Inuit respondents.

61. In 2006, the Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated released the Nunavut Adult Learning Strategy. The Strategy notes that the largest group of adult learners are those that need programming that focuses on literacy, life skills, completing high school or high school equivalent, and adult basic education. One of the Strategy's objectives is to develop a flexible learning system that allows learners to enter and leave when they need to. Such a system would reflect the individual conditions and life paths of adult learners in Nunavut. The Department of Education and Nunavut Arctic College are responsible for implementing aspects of the Strategy.

62. Adult learners are diverse: Some may want to develop basic reading and writing skills; others may want to upgrade their academic skills so that they can pursue their high school diploma or be eligible for college or university programs. Nunavut Arctic College's Adult Basic Education program focuses on core academic competencies (ABE-core). This program provides adult learners with curricula similar to what is available in the territory's Kindergarten to Grade 12 program and covers English, Inuktitut, math, science, and social studies, among other subjects. It has six levels, ranging from the equivalent of grades 1 to 3, to Grade 12:

- Level 110—grades 1 to 3
- Level 120—grades 4 to 6
- Level 130—grades 7 to 9
- Level 140—grades 10 and 11
- Level 150—Grade 12 (general)
- Level 160—Grade 12 (advanced)

63. The College delivers the ABE-core program as well as various pre-employment training programs including Adult Basic Education–Essential Skills (ABE–Essential Skills). This program allows learners to develop the skills they need for entry-level or semi-skilled jobs in Nunavut. The program covers reading, writing, and numeracy skills; runs for two semesters in the daytime; and includes 90 hours of workplace experience. The College has received federal funding to deliver ABE–Essential Skills.

64. Some adults may be missing some or all of the credits they need to graduate from high school. Others who have graduated from high school may be missing prerequisite courses or may lack the academic skills needed to get into post-secondary programs. In those cases, it is important

for learners to be able to access adult high school programs and college or university preparatory or qualifying programs.

65. In 2013, to help learners obtain their high school diplomas, the Department of Education and Nunavut Arctic College created the Pathway to Adult Secondary School Graduation program (PASS), a free online program of high school courses for adult learners. Adult learners can earn up to 35 high school credits through PASS. The program allows adult learners to work at their own pace and offers some core grade 11 and 12 subjects, including English, math, science, social studies, and Aulajaaqtut (which covers topics such as health and well-being).

66. According to the College, many applicants required an upgrading year to be eligible for its programs, because they lacked the marks, the required courses, and/or a high school diploma. To address this need, the College offered adult learners a variety of preparatory programs so that they could become eligible for and succeed in its degree, diploma, or trades programs. These programs included

- College Foundation, for learners who wished to become eligible for the College's programs (as well as a program for students who wanted to enter the College's teaching program);
- pre-nursing, for learners who wished to be eligible for the College's nursing program; and
- pre-apprenticeship, for learners who wished to enter trades such as electrical, plumbing, or carpentry.

67. Nunavut Arctic College has admission requirements for its various programs. For example, learners must have

- English reading and writing and math skills at the mid-120 level (equivalent to Grade 5) to be eligible for ABE–Essential Skills,
- English reading and writing skills at the 140 level (equivalent to grades 10 and 11) to enter PASS,
- English reading and writing and math skills at the 130 level (equivalent to Grade 9) to enter the College Foundation program, or
- a high school diploma (with Grade 12 English and math) to enter the pre-nursing program.

Entrance requirements for its pre-apprenticeship programs vary. For example, to enter the Pre-Apprenticeship Electrician program, learners must have Level 130 in math and English reading and writing.

68. Learners may have to leave their communities or the territory to attend programs at the College or to pursue post-secondary education or skills training at other institutions. The costs of travel and accommodation can prevent learners from relocating to pursue their education or training.

What we found

69. We found that adult learners faced barriers to furthering their education. Over the past five school years, in most of Nunavut's communities (17 of 25), Nunavut Arctic College did not offer its core Adult Basic Education (ABE-core) program for adult learners who wanted to develop their literacy and other academic skills. Lack of access to the ABE-core program can prevent adult learners from getting the skills they need to obtain their high school diplomas and/or enter trades or other post-secondary programs, including those offered by the College. In contrast, the College offered its Essential Skills program, which prepares learners for semi-skilled jobs, more frequently and in more communities. Learners were eligible for financial aid if they were taking work-related skills upgrading programs, such as ABE–Essential Skills, but not if they were taking the ABE-core program.

70. We found that adult learners faced barriers to accessing the PASS program and obtaining enough credits to graduate. As of September 2018, eight participants in the program had met the territory's high school graduation requirements.

71. We found that Nunavut Arctic College offered college preparatory programs in only a few communities. As a result, many adult learners would need to leave their communities to access them. The College had limited base funding for College Foundation, preventing it from offering that program more widely. Learners taking these programs are eligible for financial aid through Adult Learning and Training Supports (ALTS). However, ALTS does not cover the costs of dependents (which includes children and unemployed spouses).

72. Our analysis supporting this finding presents what we examined and discusses the following topics:

- Access to Nunavut Arctic College's core Adult Basic Education program
- Access to programs for adults wanting to obtain high school diplomas
- Support for adults wanting to obtain high school diplomas by attending high school in their communities
- Access to college preparatory programs offered by Nunavut Arctic College
- Information for decision making

Why this finding matters

73. This finding matters because to improve their education levels and be more employable, adult learners need access to programs that allow them opportunities to

- upgrade core academic skills, including literacy and numeracy skills;
- obtain their high school diplomas; and
- pursue post-secondary education, skills or trades training, or employment.

Recommendations

74. Our recommendations in this area of examination appear at paragraphs 87, 94, and 95.

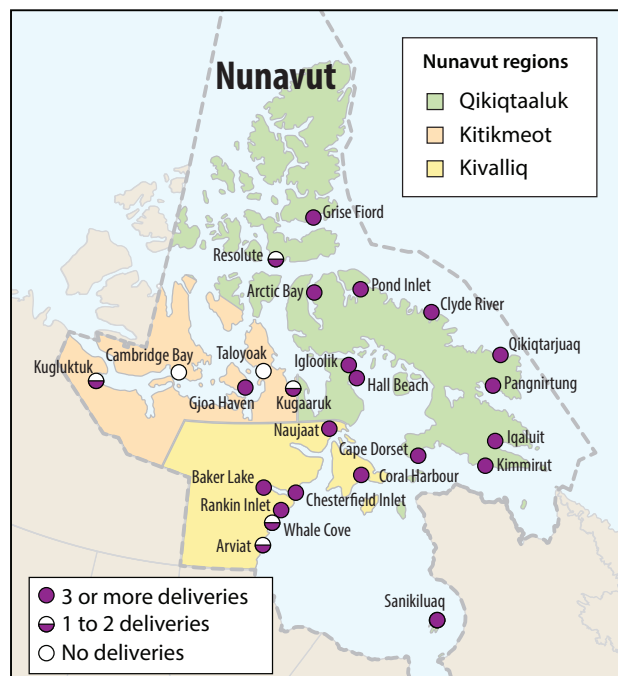
Analysis to support this finding

75. **What we examined.** We examined whether adult learners had access to selected types of adult education programs and financial aid through the Financial Assistance for Nunavut Students (FANS) and ALTS programs.

76. **Access to Nunavut Arctic College's core Adult Basic Education program.** We found that the College offered its ABE–Essential Skills program in 18 of 25 communities at least three times over the past five school years (2014–2015 to 2018–2019) (Exhibit 2). This program is designed to develop English and math skills at the 120 level, along with other skills adult learners need for entry-level or semi-skilled jobs in Nunavut.

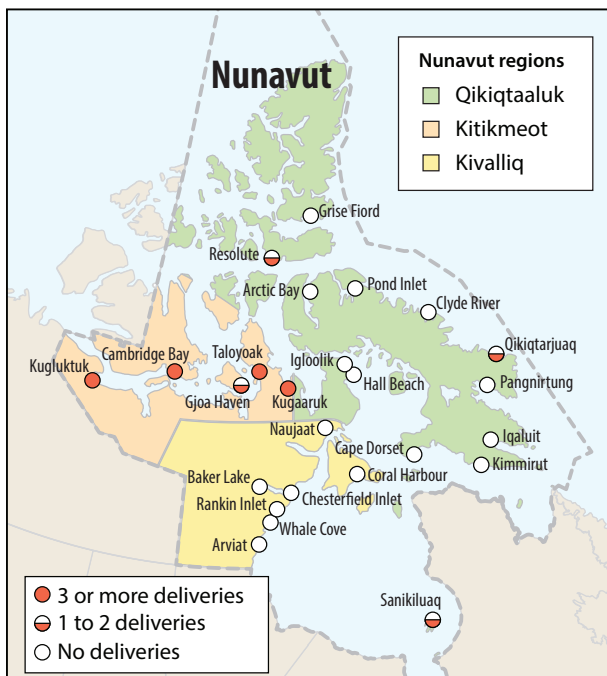
77. In contrast, we found that adult learners had far less access to the College's ABE-core program that would allow them to develop basic literacy and numeracy skills equivalent to grades 1 to 3 (Level 110) or more advanced academic skills equivalent to grades 7 to 12 (Level 130 and above). The College delivered its ABE-core program in only 4 of 25 communities in Nunavut at least three times over the past five school years (2014–2015 to 2018–2019), all of them in the Kitikmeot Region (Exhibit 3). During the same period, the College did not offer its ABE-core program in 17 of 25 communities. As a result, adults living in these communities had limited access to upgrading that would allow them to become eligible to enter various Nunavut Arctic College programs, such as preparatory programs, trades programs, and the Nunavut Teachers Education Program.

Exhibit 2 Nunavut Arctic College offered its Adult Basic Education–Essential Skills program in most of the communities over the past five years (2014–2015 to 2018–2019)



Source: Based on data provided by Nunavut Arctic College (data unaudited)

Exhibit 3 Nunavut Arctic College offered its core Adult Basic Education program in few communities over the past five years (2014–2015 to 2018–2019)



Source: Based on data provided by Nunavut Arctic College (data unaudited)

78. We found that the lack of access to ABE-core also presented a barrier to adult learners who wanted to enter the PASS program. We found that 165 of 452 applications (37%) to PASS over five semesters (fall 2016 to fall 2018) were denied because the applicants did not have the required competencies in grade 10 or 11 English reading and writing (Level 140) to enter PASS. College staff informed us that they tried to help these adult learners to develop learning plans. However, the College said that these learners often had nowhere to go to upgrade their skills so they could qualify for PASS, either because ABE-core was not offered in their communities or because they could not go when the program was offered. Returning to high school may be an option for some learners but not necessarily for those who work or have children or other family responsibilities.

79. We found that more than half of the applicants (87 of 165, or 53%) not accepted into PASS over the five semesters we examined came from six communities—Iqaluit, Arviat, Baker Lake, Pond Inlet, Rankin Inlet, and Whale Cove—where the ABE-core program was not offered during the past five years.

80. The Nunavut Adult Learning Strategy recommended increasing adult night-school options. We found that ABE classes were offered only during weekdays and only from September to April; no classes were offered at night or on weekends, or from May to August. This presented barriers to learners who were not available during the day, because of work or family responsibilities, or who wanted to take classes during the spring and summer.

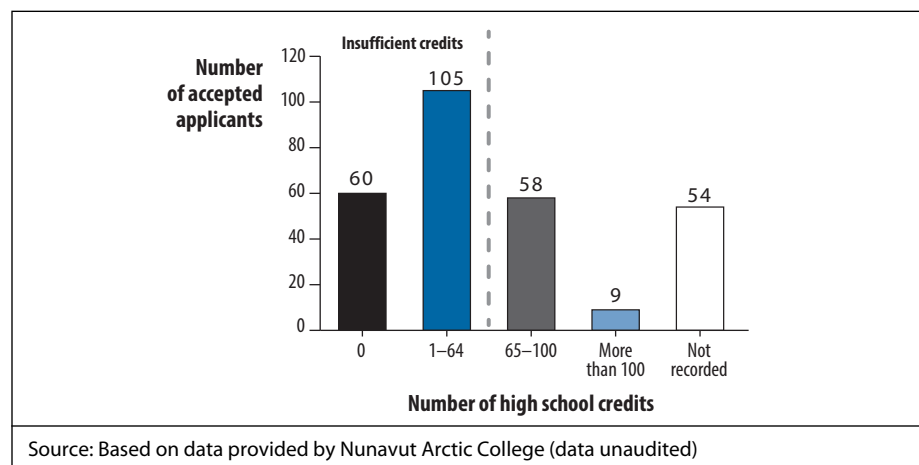
81. Several factors affected the College's ability to provide its ABE-core program in communities, including

- a lack of necessary skills and experience by some adult educators to teach the ABE-core program,
- limited space in some community learning centres, and
- limited funding for ABE-core programming and instructors.

82. We found that adult learners taking ABE–Essential Skills were eligible for financial aid through ALTS. However, those taking ABE-core were not eligible for this support. According to the Department of Family Services, ABE upgrading programs without a work-related component cannot be funded by ALTS.

83. **Access to programs for adults wanting to obtain high school diplomas.** We found that most adult learners enrolled in PASS could take all of the courses offered through the program and still not be eligible to graduate. Like high school students, PASS participants need at least 100 credits to obtain their high school diplomas. Through PASS, learners can take up to seven courses and earn up to 35 credits. However, most learners (71%) accepted into PASS (for whom high school credit information was recorded) between fall 2016 and fall 2018 had fewer than 65 credits (Exhibit 4).

Exhibit 4 Most of the adult learners accepted into the Pathway to Adult Secondary School Graduation program (PASS) between fall 2016 and fall 2018 had fewer than 65 credits—not enough to graduate after taking the program



84. We found that the Department of Education intended to create a policy that would grant a high school diploma to adult learners who completed the seven courses offered through PASS, even if they did not have the 100 credits required. However, it never established this policy. As of September 2018, eight PASS learners had met the territory's high school graduation requirements.

85. According to Nunavut Arctic College, the average success rate for PASS courses was 14%. PASS did not offer one-on-one academic support to students in their communities. However, learners could access academic support online or by telephone from instructors in Iqaluit.

86. We found that the Department and the College did not offer (through PASS or other means) courses such as Grade 12 science or advanced levels of English or math to adult learners not attending their local high schools. Such courses are needed for admission to the College's degree programs, such as nursing or teaching, and other post-secondary programs outside of the territory. Nor did they offer a program for adults who had high school diplomas and wanted to upgrade their marks or take new courses. Adults could take courses that they needed online, but they would have to pay for the courses. Some courses can cost up to \$1,000 each; however, neither FANS nor ALTS reimburses those learners. Furthermore, ALTS funds only full-time programs—those with a minimum of 30 hours of in-class instruction per week. As a result, adult learners in part-time programs such as Nunavut Arctic College's Language Revitalization program, offered in Cambridge Bay, were not eligible for ALTS funding.

87. **Recommendation.** The Department of Education should review the requirements needed to obtain a high school diploma through the Pathway to Adult Secondary School Graduation program (PASS) and determine whether alternative requirements for obtaining a Nunavut high school diploma should be established for adult learners.

The Department's response. Agreed. The Department of Education is reviewing the requirements needed to obtain a high school diploma through the PASS program. The Department had identified a policy gap for the program wherein it cannot currently issue a high school diploma to graduates of the PASS program unless they have 100 credits.

To address this issue, the Department commissioned a review of the PASS program in April 2018 to identify the policy gaps and offer recommendations for addressing them. While this circumstance has not occurred (to date, all PASS graduates have thus far been issued high school diplomas), the Department has identified the potential for this situation to occur while this policy gap exists.

The Department is currently working on addressing this policy gap so that all graduates of the PASS program can be issued high school diplomas. The Department expects to have this policy gap resolved by the spring of 2019.

88. **Support for adults wanting to obtain high school diplomas by attending high school in their communities.** Learners over the age of 21 can attend high school in their communities, subject to the approval of the District Education Authority. However, we found that the Department of Education did not have any specific policies for schools on programming or supports for adult learners who wished to attend high school in their communities. Nor did the Department provide schools with any extra funding to support the needs of adult learners. Schools had to assign staff from their teaching rosters for these purposes.

89. We noted that two of the seven schools we examined had dedicated classroom space for adult learners and were flexible about attendance and course deadlines. Adult learners could take a variety of courses that they needed to graduate, including English, science, math, and social studies, and receive one-on-one support from a teacher. According to school staff, flexibility and personalized attention are key to the success of adult learners, some of whom have full- or part-time jobs or family responsibilities. We noted that one of the schools had to end special classes for adult learners in the 2017–2018 school year when it lost teaching positions and had to move teachers elsewhere.

90. **Access to college preparatory programs offered by Nunavut Arctic College.** We found that Nunavut Arctic College offered its College Foundation program in Iqaluit in four of the past five years and at least twice in each region in the past five years (Exhibit 5). The College had limited base funding for this program and relied on third-party funding to offer this program outside of Iqaluit.

91. The College also offered a College Foundation program—specifically for learners who wished to enter the Nunavut Teacher Education Program—in seven communities other than Iqaluit over the past five years. In 2018, the College decided that it would stop offering this specific foundation program. As a result, all learners, including those who wanted to enter the teaching program, had to rely on the regular College Foundation program. The College told us that to offer its College Foundation program outside of Iqaluit, it would need third-party funding.

92. We noted that the College offered pre-nursing in Iqaluit and pre-apprenticeship programs in Rankin Inlet. We found that learners taking these preparatory programs, as well as College Foundation and some preparatory programs at other post-secondary institutions, were eligible for financial assistance only under the ALTS program. While FANS provides learners with an increased living allowance for their dependents (which includes children and unemployed spouses), and

funding to cover the travel costs of their dependents, these benefits are not available through ALTS. According to the College, 55% of students in their programs had children. The lack of financial aid for dependents under ALTS could be a barrier to learners wanting to advance their education.

Exhibit 5 Nunavut Arctic College offered its regular College Foundation program at least twice in each region for the 2014–2015 to 2018–2019 school years



Source: Based on data provided by Nunavut Arctic College (data unaudited)

93. **Information for decision making.** We found that the College was not consistently collecting information on the number of program applicants or on the results of entrance tests, and there was little sharing of this information within the College. Consistently collecting and analyzing data would be useful for the College to

- assess what literacy and other academic upgrading programs adult learners need,
- plan course delivery, and
- determine the extent to which program delivery in communities is meeting the Nunavut Adult Learning Strategy's objective of a flexible and accessible learning system.

94. **Recommendation.** Nunavut Arctic College should ensure that it collects information on program applicants consistently and uses it to inform decisions such as when and where to offer adult literacy and academic upgrading programs. The College should also ensure that relevant information is shared among partners involved in supporting adult learners, such as the Department of Education and the Department of Family Services.

***The College's response.** Agreed. During the 2018–2019 academic year, the Nunavut Arctic College moved up the schedule of community assessments, which are reports annually collected by College staff in communities and are used to drive determination of which programs are delivered in which community. This enabled College staff to determine upcoming programs in a timelier manner, so that information could be provided to the public earlier than previously possible.*

The College also recognizes a need for more quantitative information to play a role in determining program deliveries at campuses and community learning centres. The College is currently in the midst of implementing a new Student Information System which will allow the College to more easily collapse data into aggregate reports to inform decision making.

The College will initiate, in the upcoming academic year, discussions with the Advanced Education Division of the Department of Education on how the College and the Department can align each organization's respective information for the purpose of decision making on when and where to offer adult literacy and upgrading programs.

The College will also make an effort to initiate the creation of an ongoing working group of stakeholder departments involved in supporting adult learners, such as the Department of Education, the Department of Family Services, and potentially the new Department of Human Resources.

95. **Recommendation.** The Department of Family Services should review its financial aid programs to ensure that there are no unintended barriers to adult learners wishing to upgrade their education.

***The Department's response.** Agreed. The Department of Family Services is presently reviewing its financial aid programs to ensure that they meet the needs of Nunavummiut. The Department anticipates implementing minor changes in September 2019. Major changes are subject to approval by the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut.*

Conclusion

96. We concluded that selected Government of Nunavut organizations had not adequately supported youth and adult learners' transition to post-secondary education and employment.

About the Audit

This independent assurance report was prepared by the Office of the Auditor General of Canada on the support to high school students and adult learners provided by selected Government of Nunavut organizations. Our responsibility was to provide objective information, advice, and assurance to assist the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut in its scrutiny of the government's management of resources and programs, and to conclude on whether the support provided by the selected Government of Nunavut organizations to high school students and adult learners complied in all significant respects with the applicable criteria.

All work in this audit was performed to a reasonable level of assurance in accordance with the Canadian Standard for Assurance Engagements (CSAE) 3001—Direct Engagements set out by the Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada (CPA Canada) in the CPA Canada Handbook—Assurance.

The Office applies Canadian Standard on Quality Control 1 and, accordingly, maintains a comprehensive system of quality control, including documented policies and procedures regarding compliance with ethical requirements, professional standards, and applicable legal and regulatory requirements.

In conducting the audit work, we have complied with the independence and other ethical requirements of the relevant rules of professional conduct applicable to the practice of public accounting in Canada, which are founded on fundamental principles of integrity, objectivity, professional competence and due care, confidentiality, and professional behaviour.

In accordance with our regular audit process, we obtained the following from entity management:

- confirmation of management's responsibility for the subject under audit;
- acknowledgement of the suitability of the criteria used in the audit;
- confirmation that all known information that has been requested, or that could affect the findings or audit conclusion, has been provided; and
- confirmation that the audit report is factually accurate.

Audit objective

The objective of this audit was to determine whether selected Government of Nunavut organizations adequately supported high school students and adult learners to transition to post-secondary education and employment.

Scope and approach

The audit examined the following topics:

- support to high school students in their transition to post-secondary education and employment,
- access to selected adult education programs,
- access to college preparatory programs such as the College Foundation program, and
- financial assistance to learners.

The following three organizations were included in the audit: the Department of Education, the Department of Family Services, and Nunavut Arctic College.

The audit included community visits in each of Nunavut's three regions and discussions with school leaders (principals, vice-principals), teachers, individuals who provide support to students (such as guidance counsellors and school community counsellors), adult educators, other officials from the three entities involved in the audit, members of selected district education authorities, and third-party stakeholders. The audit also included reviewing and analyzing key documents, and testing samples of files pertaining to students' career and program plans. In selected instances, we analyzed unaudited data provided by the Department of Education and Nunavut Arctic College.

This audit contributed to Canada's actions in relation to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4, which is "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."

Criteria

| Criteria | Sources |
|--|---|
| To determine whether selected Government of Nunavut organizations adequately supported high school students and adult learners to transition to post-secondary education and employment, we used the following criteria: | |
| The Department of Education has a policy in place to direct its activities, including coordination, to support successful student transitions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy on Results, Treasury Board, Government of Canada • <i>Education Act</i> • Mission Statement, Department of Education • CMEC Reference Framework for Successful Student Transitions; Council of Ministers of Education, Canada; 2017 |
| The Department of Education provides high school students with information and guidance on different career and education pathways (including support to high school students in their development of career and program plans). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2017–18 Nunavut Secondary School Administration Handbook, Department of Education • CMEC Reference Framework for Successful Student Transitions; Council of Ministers of Education, Canada; 2017 • Business Plan: Government of Nunavut & Territorial Corporations, 2018–2021 |
| The Department of Education prepares high school students for their transition to post-secondary education (this could include support to students when applying for post-secondary education, obtaining financial aid, and providing students with life skills and financial literacy training to help students prepare for life away from home). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turaaqtavut, Government of Nunavut, 5th Legislative Assembly, 2018 • CMEC Reference Framework for Successful Student Transitions; Council of Ministers of Education, Canada; 2017 |
| Nunavut Arctic College provides high school students with information and guidance on education pathways available through the College. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CMEC Reference Framework for Successful Student Transitions; Council of Ministers of Education, Canada; 2017 • Business Plan: Government of Nunavut & Territorial Corporations, 2018–2021 |

| Criteria | Sources |
|--|---|
| <p>To determine whether selected Government of Nunavut organizations adequately supported high school students and adult learners to transition to post-secondary education and employment, we used the following criteria: (continued)</p> | |
| <p>The Department of Education provides high school students with an opportunity to experience first-hand different careers and/or work environments and cultural/traditional activities.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inuit Societal Values (Pilimmaksarniq/Pijariuqsarniq), Government of Nunavut • The Makimaniq Plan 2: A Shared Approach to Poverty Reduction, 2017–2022 • 2017–18 Nunavut Secondary School Administration Handbook, Department of Education • Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit: Education Framework for Nunavut Curriculum, Department of Education, 2007 • CMEC Reference Framework for Successful Student Transitions; Council of Ministers of Education, Canada; 2017 |
| <p>The Department of Education provides high school students with access to a range of courses so that they can pursue the education pathway of their choice.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2017–18 Nunavut Secondary School Administration Handbook, Department of Education • CMEC Reference Framework for Successful Student Transitions; Council of Ministers of Education, Canada; 2017 |
| <p>The Department of Education ensures that students who graduate from high school in Nunavut have academic skills and competencies that are consistent with departmental standards of achievement.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Education Act</i> • 2017–18 Nunavut Secondary School Administration Handbook, Department of Education • Turaaqtavut, Government of Nunavut, 5th Legislative Assembly, 2018 • Business Plan: Government of Nunavut & Territorial Corporations, 2018–2021 • The Makimaniq Plan 2: A Shared Approach to Poverty Reduction, 2017–2022 |
| <p>Nunavut Arctic College and the Department of Education provide adult learners (in all communities) with access to Adult Basic Education and programs that enable them to complete high school.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Nunavut Arctic College Act</i> • <i>Education Act</i> • Mission Statement, Department of Education • The Makimaniq Plan 2: A Shared Approach to Poverty Reduction, 2017–2022 • Nunavut Adult Learning Strategy, 2006 • Business Plan: Government of Nunavut & Territorial Corporations, 2018–2021 • Turaaqtavut, Government of Nunavut, 5th Legislative Assembly, 2018 • Continuing Education Policy (under revision), Nunavut Arctic College, 2012 |

| Criteria | Sources |
|---|--|
| To determine whether selected Government of Nunavut organizations adequately supported high school students and adult learners to transition to post-secondary education and employment, we used the following criteria: (continued) | |
| Nunavut Arctic College and the Department of Education provide learners (in all communities) with access to academic upgrading, such as the College Foundation program, to enable them to be eligible for post-secondary education. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Nunavut Arctic College Act</i> • Nunavut Arctic College Mission, 2012 • Continuing Education Policy (under revision), Nunavut Arctic College, 2012 |
| The Department of Family Services provides access to financial aid in a manner that does not present unnecessary barriers to learners. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nunavut Adult Learning Strategy, 2006 • Nunavut Student Funding Handbook • <i>Student Financial Assistance Act</i> and <i>Student Financial Assistance Regulations</i> |

Period covered by the audit

The audit covered the period between 1 April 2015 and 28 September 2018. This is the period to which the audit conclusion applies. However, to gain a more complete understanding of the subject matter of the audit, we also examined certain matters that preceded the starting date of this period.

Date of the report

We obtained sufficient and appropriate audit evidence on which to base our conclusion on 2 April 2019, in Ottawa, Canada.

Audit team

Principal: Jim McKenzie
Director: Liliane Cotnoir

Amélie Beaupré-Moreau
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List of Recommendations

The following table lists the recommendations and responses found in this report. The paragraph number preceding the recommendation indicates the location of the recommendation in the report, and the numbers in parentheses indicate the location of the related discussion.

| Recommendation | Response |
|---|--|
| High school students | |
| <p>31. The Department of Education should develop and implement a strategy that specifies the actions that it and other partners will take to help students graduate from high school and transition to post-secondary education and employment. (26–30)</p> | <p>The Department's response. Agreed. In the 2019–20 fiscal year, the Department of Education will develop a 10-year strategic plan. Strategies to help students successfully graduate and transition from high school will be included within this plan. Project planning for this began in fall 2018.</p> <p>In spring 2018, the Department staffed a new position, within the Advanced Education Division. The focus of this position is to support the transition of adult learners either from high school, post-secondary education, or the labour market.</p> |
| <p>32. The Department of Education should take steps to improve the quality of attendance data. (26–30)</p> | <p>The Department's response. Agreed. In 2012, the Department of Education began implementing the Student Information System (SIS) to standardize and improve the quality of student data that the Department can access. Data entry is generally done by school staff, with additional support provided remotely by divisional staff. The reliability and accuracy of data entry is impacted by staff vacancies and turnover.</p> <p>The Department has developed and is implementing online training modules and system manuals for school office administrators, secretaries, and teachers, to ensure that all key users receive training on how to use, and enter data into, the SIS. This support helps to streamline the data-entry process and builds capacity within staff to ensure the overall quality of student data.</p> |
| <p>38. The Department of Education should develop and carry out a strategy to recruit and retain staff in schools and throughout the Department. The strategy should</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be based on a needs analysis, • identify and address the conditions that discourage working as a teacher in Nunavut, and • identify deliverables and related timelines and resources. <p>The Department should periodically assess the effectiveness of its strategy and take corrective action as required. (33–37)</p> | <p>The Department's response. Agreed. In the 2019–20 fiscal year, the Department of Education will develop a 10-year teacher retention and recruitment strategy. Project planning for this strategy development began in fall 2018.</p> |

| Recommendation | Response |
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| <p>39. The Department of Education should develop specific actions to encourage students to enrol in post-secondary education programs that would lead to positions in the Department. (33–37)</p> | <p>The Department's response. Agreed. The 10-year teacher retention and recruitment strategy being developed in the 2019–20 fiscal year will incorporate actions to encourage students to enrol in post-secondary programs that could lead to careers in the Department of Education.</p> <p>The Department will assist students to explore a variety of possibilities for post-secondary training by entering into partnerships that will incorporate hands-on learning opportunities through practicums, work experience, job shadowing, and co-op learning. The Department supports Take Your Kids to Work Day.</p> |
| <p>44. The Department of Education should complete its policies and guidelines on student assessment and implement them. It should also complete and implement the draft directive for school staff on the steps they can take to improve student performance and to further reduce the gap between classroom marks and end-of-year standardized exams. (40–43)</p> | <p>The Department's response. Agreed. The Department of Education's student assessment and reporting policy, framework, and handbook aim to provide guidelines on how to assess students for success and achieve consistency and reliability in assessment practices across Nunavut schools.</p> <p>The Department has a draft student assessment and reporting policy that is being reviewed following feedback from the Coalition of Nunavut District Education Authorities, which recommended that the Department revise the policy to further reflect Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit. The Department has commenced the reviewing process and the document will be ready for the 2020–2021 school year.</p> <p>The Department will continue its efforts to reduce the gap between end-of-year standardized departmental exams and classroom marks for Grade 12 English.</p> <p>Recognizing the connection between a responsive, welcoming, and safe learning environment and student achievement, the Department is working toward increasing the success rates in the standardized exams through the development of a safe and caring school framework. This framework aims to create a teaching and learning environment that promotes a sense of achievement among students and educators, thus leading to higher success rates.</p> <p>Over the next two years, the Department intends to have data analysis systems in place so that policy decisions are informed by data.</p> <p>The Department will also initiate the review process of the School Operations Directive: Review of Marks Differential Directive (2013).</p> |
| <p>47. The Department of Education should complete and implement its directive and its delivery plan on distance learning. (45–46)</p> | <p>The Department's response. Agreed. The Department of Education is finalizing the distance learning directive for students registered in Nunavut Kindergarten to Grade 12 schools for the 2019–2020 academic year. This directive clarifies the process for students, parents, principals, and district education authorities. It has simplified the process to access distance learning for parents and students.</p> <p>The Department will make an effort to initiate the process of developing a delivery plan for distance learning through a collaborative process involving several divisions. The delivery plan will further support implementation.</p> |

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| <p>52. The Department of Education should ensure that high school students are getting advice on academic and career options and that students complete career and program plans. The Department should also provide training and support materials to school staff on how to give students career advice. (48–51)</p> <p>55. Nunavut Arctic College should inform high school students about the various academic programs it offers and ensure that it keeps information on its programs and admission requirements clear and up to date. (53–54)</p> | <p>The Department's response. Agreed. The completion of the career and program planning process is mandatory at Grade 9 and embedded into Aulajaaqtut courses at grades 10 and 11. Schools that have undergone a high staff and administrative turnover may not be following the mandate. To assist schools to better support students in career exploration, course selection, and involving parents in these life choices, the Department of Education will work with Regional School Operations administrators to ensure that school administrators and staff are aware of the career program planning process and have accounted for this in their Long Range / Year Plans to undertake this process with their students. This data will be used to inform the school's Education Program Plan (EPP).</p> <p>The Department will complete the staffing for the Curriculum Development Division Transition Team, so that initiatives such as Take Your Kids to Work Day, career fairs, and links to preparing students for a successful life after high school are available to all students.</p> <p>The College's response. Agreed. The Minister responsible for the Nunavut Arctic College and the Board of Governors have directed the College to see how it can begin to address these gaps. The College has recently begun to overhaul its website and has posted an updated program schedule for the 2019–2020 academic year. The maintenance of a digital presence for the purpose of communicating information with the public is an iterative process, and the College will continue to update and improve its website content for the purpose of providing current and clear information to the public. The College has received additional funding for these activities.</p> <p>During the winter sitting of the Legislative Assembly (February–March 2019), additional base funding was appropriated for the College with the express purpose of creating a marketing, communications, and recruitment team. This team will include a divisional manager, promotional materials specialist, and two strategic recruitment coordinators. This funding will be available to the College on 1 April 2019, and the College is already preparing to fill those positions as soon as possible.</p> <p>The College acknowledges that, due to the size of the territory, some marketing activities will need to remain with individual faculties, divisions, or frontline staff in the communities. As such, the additional expertise of the headquarter division along with the supplemental funding for marketing materials and activities is intended to augment existing activities and help build capacity where necessary, rather than completely centralizing recruitment operations.</p> <p>The College recognizes the need to inform high school students and mature learners of the academic programs being offered in both the campus communities as well as the community learning centres, and is committed to improving how it communicates and markets its programs and course offerings to Nunavummiut.</p> |

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| <p>59. The Department of Education should, in collaboration with other departments and partners, increase students' access to opportunities for hands-on learning, including work placements or cooperative education options. (56–58)</p> | <p>The Department's response. Agreed. The Curriculum Development Division Transition Team in the Department of Education is tasked with increasing awareness of hands-on learning opportunities to staff, students, and parents. The Transition Team will engage partners to ensure that academic and experiential learning opportunities are tied to program planning, course selection, and career pathways.</p> <p>The Transition Team and the Iqqaqqaukkaringiq Team will review the former Nunavut Early Apprenticeship Training (NEAT) program, to see whether an updated plan for high school students to begin apprenticeship training early can or should be implemented.</p> <p>The Department is also considering how the Pathway to Adult Secondary School Graduation program (PASS) can incorporate work placements and cooperative education options.</p> |
| <p>Adult learners</p> <p>87. The Department of Education should review the requirements needed to obtain a high school diploma through the Pathway to Adult Secondary School Graduation program (PASS) and determine whether alternative requirements for obtaining a Nunavut high school diploma should be established for adult learners. (76–86)</p> | <p>The Department's response. Agreed. The Department of Education is reviewing the requirements needed to obtain a high school diploma through the PASS program. The Department had identified a policy gap for the program wherein it cannot currently issue a high school diploma to graduates of the PASS program unless they have 100 credits.</p> <p>To address this issue, the Department commissioned a review of the PASS program in April 2018 to identify the policy gaps and offer recommendations for addressing them. While this circumstance has not occurred (to date, all PASS graduates have thus far been issued high school diplomas), the Department has identified the potential for this situation to occur while this policy gap exists.</p> <p>The Department is currently working on addressing this policy gap so that all graduates of the PASS program can be issued high school diplomas. The Department expects to have this policy gap resolved by the spring of 2019.</p> |

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| <p>94. Nunavut Arctic College should ensure that it collects information on program applicants consistently and uses it to inform decisions such as when and where to offer adult literacy and academic upgrading programs. The College should also ensure that relevant information is shared among partners involved in supporting adult learners, such as the Department of Education and the Department of Family Services. (93)</p> | <p>The College's response. Agreed. During the 2018–2019 academic year, the Nunavut Arctic College moved up the schedule of community assessments, which are reports annually collected by College staff in communities and are used to drive determination of which programs are delivered in which community. This enabled College staff to determine upcoming programs in a timelier manner, so that information could be provided to the public earlier than previously possible.</p> <p>The College also recognizes a need for more quantitative information to play a role in determining program deliveries at campuses and community learning centres. The College is currently in the midst of implementing a new Student Information System which will allow the College to more easily collapse data into aggregate reports to inform decision making.</p> <p>The College will initiate, in the upcoming academic year, discussions with the Advanced Education Division of the Department of Education on how the College and the Department can align each organization's respective information for the purpose of decision making on when and where to offer adult literacy and upgrading programs.</p> <p>The College will also make an effort to initiate the creation of an ongoing working group of stakeholder departments involved in supporting adult learners, such as the Department of Education, the Department of Family Services, and potentially the new Department of Human Resources.</p> |
| <p>95. The Department of Family Services should review its financial aid programs to ensure that there are no unintended barriers to adult learners wishing to upgrade their education. (90–92)</p> | <p>The Department's response. Agreed. The Department of Family Services is presently reviewing its financial aid programs to ensure that they meet the needs of Nunavummiut. The Department anticipates implementing minor changes in September 2019. Major changes are subject to approval by the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut.</p> |

