



Education Renewal and Innovation Formative Evaluation Case Studies – Plain Language Summary

Overview

The Education Renewal and Innovation (ERI) Framework five-year formative evaluation looked at a selection of nine programs under the ERI strategy. These programs and activities were chosen based on evaluation readiness – that is, the maturity of the initiative, the availability of program data, investment of numerous resources, and public and internal interest in the results.

The case studies were evaluated using a variety of qualitative and quantitative data obtained through surveys, focus groups and interviews, administrative student records, territorial health and wellness surveys conducted by third parties, and administrative program records.

Findings on the various case studies will be used to further assess the initiatives, either supporting their continued operation in the current model, the need to make improvements as necessary, or the need to consider a different approach to bettering student outcomes.

Case Study 1: Residential Schools Awareness Training

Purpose: To support educators delivering the Northern Studies curriculum to better understand the history and legacy of residential schools in the NWT and Canada

Approach: 1-day workshop involving presentations, interactive learning exercises and small group sessions led by survivors of intergenerational trauma from residential schools

Findings:

- 500 employees trained
- Meaningful relationships formed
- Supports Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action
- Overall very positive feedback from participants
- While important to keep involving residential school survivors in program delivery, there is recognition of the emotional toll on workshop leaders

Recommendations:

- Think of ways to further increase participation
- Consider adding follow-up content, opportunities and debriefing to help put training into action

Case Study 2: Child and Youth Care Counselling Initiative

Purpose: To meet the mental health service needs of children and youth in schools and communities in the NWT

Approach: A joint initiative with Health and Social Services that places Child and Youth Care Counsellors (CYCCs) in school settings (piloted in the Dehcho and Tłı̄chq̓ regions) to provide mental health support to students and act as resources to school staff



Findings:

- Provided access to one-on-one counselling and resources in schools
- Created opportunities for students to share with others
- Educators said it created a safe school environment
- Program gave students the skills to help manage behaviours
- Need to find ways of engaging youth who aren't attending school and/or outside of school times
- Identifying appropriate meeting spaces for CYCCs and students/families can be a challenge
- Need for better communication with communities about role of CYCCs

Recommendations:

- Provide training and education opportunities for residents in child and youth mental health services
- Collaborate with local stakeholders, Elders and leaders to enhance approaches to youth wellness and improve clarity around role of CYCCs

Case Study 3: Strengthening Teacher Instruction Practices (STIP)

Purpose: To reduce teacher workloads and improve work-life balance, thereby improving teacher wellness and enhancing quality of instruction

Approach: Reduce number of classroom instructional hours to make time for collaborative and individual professional duties and learning

Findings:

- Teachers reported improvements in work-life balance and increased preparatory time at work
- There was increased participation in collaborative learning, which is a good way to improve teaching and, as a result, student outcomes
- STIP calendar changes had a negative impact on some families/households
- More work is required to ensure compliance with STIP guidelines to meet objectives

Recommendations:

- Work with broader community to ensure student dismissals are planned, coordinated and avoided where possible to address scheduling challenges faced by families
- Improve clarity of STIP guidelines to make sure objectives are being met
- Think of additional ways to address teacher, as well as principal, workload and wellness

Case Study 4: Career Focusing Program

Purpose: To encourage and support students in making decisions about their education in the interest of pursuing future careers

Approach: An optional resource available to schools to use as part of the high school Career and Life Management (CALM) course that helps students identify and assess career interests, and match those to education and training



Findings: Unable to assess the effectiveness of the program due to lack of information on how it was implemented

Recommendations: Create a program monitoring plan to better evaluate use and outcomes

Case Study 5: Northern Distance Learning

Purpose: To provide senior high school students in small NWT communities with access to academic courses necessary for admission into, and success within, post-secondary programs

Approach: A blended learning program delivered from East Three Secondary School in Inuvik to nine schools and four education bodies

Findings:

- Improved access and enrolment in academic courses in small schools
- Increased confidence among students in ability to continue their academic careers
- Majority of students received course credit for their Northern Distance Learning (NDL) course
- Only one third of students earned a high enough course grade to enroll in post-secondary

Recommendations:

- Monitor graduation and post-secondary enrolment rates for NDL students compared to those in regular program
- Do more to address other challenges faced by schools in small communities to ensure equitable education across the NWT

Case Study 6: Health and Wellness Curriculum Pilot

Purpose: To help students experience new and engaging ways of learning while gaining valuable health and wellness skills

Approach: A new Health and Wellness curriculum for grades 1-9 using collaborative inquiry as the teaching and learning method, in which students work together to pick topics they can learn about as a class

Findings:

- 65 teachers trained in curriculum since 2016, but not all deliver it
- Overall, teachers are satisfied with the curriculum
- Teachers say that students:
 - Showed health and wellness competencies
 - Were more engaged in their learning
 - Learned about health and wellness topics in new ways
 - Worked together to help their communities
- Teachers say they need:
 - More training, support and resources
 - More time to plan lessons
 - Reduced content in the curriculum



Recommendations:

- Findings encourage the use of collaborative inquiry as basis for future K-12 curriculum planning
- Continue to encourage projects that involve and engage communities
- Work with education bodies to find innovative ways to support teachers in delivering the curriculum

Case Study 7: JK-12 Systemic Assessment Practices

Purpose: To test grade 6 and 9 students in English or French Language Arts and Math, and to test grade 12 students in higher level academic grade 12 courses

Approach: The official learning assessments in the NWT include Alberta Diploma Exams (grade 12) and Alberta Achievement Tests (grades 6 and 9)

Findings:

- Low participation in Alberta Achievement Tests (AATs) and Diploma Exams (DEs) do not provide accurate and meaningful understanding of student success in the NWT
 - For example, in small communities, only 58% of students took AATs in 2018 and 41% took three or more DEs
- The difference between teacher-awarded marks and AAT/DE results show assessments aren't tracking student success similarly, raising questions about the validity of assessments
 - Either teacher-awarded marks or AATs/DEs are not accurately tracking student success
- ECE does not typically use AAT/DE data
 - While not consistent across NWT classrooms or education bodies, teacher awarded marks give a more complete understanding of student learning

Recommendations:

- Provide more resources to interpret and share AAT/DE assessment results so they can be used to inform decision-making and planning at the department level, or discontinue/revise use of AATs and DEs as systemic assessment tools
- Find ways to improve participation in AATs and DEs in NWT communities, or discontinue/revise their use as systemic assessment tools
- Set standards for acceptable differences between teacher-awarded marks and AAT/DE results, or discontinue/ revise their use as assessment tools
- Ensure all decisions on use of AATs/DEs are made in consultation with education bodies, based on their use of these tools

Case Study 8: JK-12 Education System Reporting Requirements

Purpose: To report on the JK-12 education system, as required by education policy and legislation

Approach: Reporting requirements reviewed as part of this case study include: 1) Education Operating Plans and annual reports; 2) School Improvement Plans; 3) NWT Student Success Initiative proposals and reports; and Healthy Foods for Learning reports.



Findings:

- Overall, the reporting process has clearly defined roles and responsibilities
- Most schools submit the required reports
- A majority of reports were missing key requirements
- The review of reporting requirements found:
 - Overlapping or redundant requirements
 - Perception of competing priorities
 - Inconsistent, sometimes conflicting requirements
 - Burden on education authorities from many reports

Recommendations:

- Continue to work with education authorities to provide clarity and support regarding reporting requirements
- Analyze all existing and future reporting requirements to remove contradictions, redundancy and the unnecessary burden on schools and education bodies

Case Study 9: *Our Languages Curriculum Development*

Purpose: To grow the NWT's nine Indigenous languages and help students on their journey of being, knowing, becoming and believing as capable people

Approach: A new curriculum for Indigenous language instruction from JK-12 throughout the NWT, offered either as a core language or immersion program

Findings:

- High level of satisfaction with the approach and quality of the curriculum
- Collaboration and engagement with Indigenous partners was found to be effective in creating an innovative, culturally representative land- and place-based curriculum during the development phase
- Curriculum has yet to be implemented at the community level (e.g. community language programming)

Recommendations:

- Formally engage Indigenous partners on ways to implement the curriculum in communities
- Work with schools, communities and Indigenous governments to understand current and future language instructor needs (e.g. number of instructors) to support implementation of the curriculum in schools and communities moving forward