

The NWT JK – 12 curriculum is out of date and in need of renewal. ECE regularly reviews its curriculum and resources to ensure they align with the NWT’s priorities and values for education. Exploring what options are available is a normal part of reviewing and renewing curriculum. As such, ECE has conducted research to explore how other provinces and territories approach curriculum, including British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and the Yukon. ** Please note that research done on Alberta, was done prior to the recent release of their new DRAFT K-6 curriculum.*

Historically, the NWT has had a longstanding and close relationship with Alberta Education in the areas of curriculum and large-scale student assessments tools. Alberta Education is currently in the process of changing their curricula for every subject and grade from Kindergarten to Grade 12. This makes significant curricular change in the NWT inevitable, as the implementation of this new curricula will require a large systemic overhaul in the NWT and additional resources to guide this transition.

Development of curriculum and related programs in the NWT must meet the needs and interests of NWT students and communities. It must be a curriculum that is grounded in Indigenous world views and reflect the identities of our northern children and support them in becoming capable people.

The following presentation provides an overview of the NWT JK-12 Curriculum Renewal Discussion Paper which outlines ECE’s exploration of curriculum renewal in the NWT. As such, it provides a common starting place whereby questions, concerns, and comments may be raised. Information gathered through these discussions will be used to inform decisions regarding the renewal of NWT JK-12 school curriculum and future partnerships.



Presentation Outline

- Understanding Curriculum
 - *Create, Adapt, and Adopt*
 - *Curriculum that Meets NWT Goals*
 - *NWT Created Curriculum*
 - *Locally Developed Courses*
 - *NWT Specific Programming*
- Recent Developments in Alberta
- Researching Curriculum
 - *Research Themes*
 - *Research Findings*
 - *Areas for Further Investigation*
- Proposed Timeline
- Before Making a Decision
- Questions and Comments

This presentation will cover the following items:

Recent Developments in Alberta - Moving towards a decision about curriculum in the NWT requires understanding the recent developments in curriculum in Alberta Education.

Understanding NWT JK-12 Curriculum - this section provides some background on curriculum. It briefly describes:


- What is involved in curriculum development in a JK-12 system
- The goals for education in the NWT, and
- The areas of the current education system that will remain in place regardless of any change of curriculum or jurisdictional partnership.

Researching the Curriculum of the Western Canadian Provinces - this section summarizes the research ECE undertook to see how aligned the curricula of the 4 western provinces are to the NWT's goals. It outlines the questions and methodology for the research and the findings of the research based on the 4 themes necessary to meet the goals for education in the NWT, as well as the areas of further investigation needed.

Proposed Timeline – this slide speaks to the proposed timeline for a decision about curriculum and implementation


Before Making a Decision – This slide reiterates that no decision has been made, and will not be made without input from education partners including Indigenous Governments, Education Bodies, and the Northwest Territories Teachers' Association.

Questions and Comments – This is where we hear from you.



Understanding Curriculum

- The overall goal of the NWT education system is to develop an **NWT Capable Person**.
- Curriculum is primarily designed for teachers as they use it as the basis for planning instruction and student assessment.
- Curriculum sets out the concepts, attitudes and skills that students are expected to demonstrate at various stages of their development.
- Curriculum development requires considerable financial and human resources, as well as time.



The overall goal of the NWT education system is to develop an **NWT Capable Person**. A capable person is one who demonstrates integrity in relationships that honour self, others, the land, and the spiritual world. Through these relationships, a capable person grows and develops physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

As per the Education Act, the Minister of ECE is responsible for the establishment and approval of curriculum for all subject areas from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12 (JK-12).

Once approved, curriculum documents are shared with Education Bodies and are added to the list of NWT Approved Curriculum, which is expected to be taught in all NWT schools, to all NWT students.

Curriculum is primarily designed for teachers as they use it as the basis for planning instruction and student assessment. In some cases, *support materials* such as unit or lesson plans, or recommended teacher or student resources, are also developed to accompany the curriculum. Curriculum sets out the concepts, attitudes and skills that students are expected to demonstrate at various stages of their development.

Over time, curriculum design has shifted away from learning outcomes and has moved to towards “competencies”. Outcomes emphasize content, whereas Competencies are more holistic and emphasize the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values a capable person needs to know and do in whatever situation arises.

Renewal of NWT JK-12 curriculum will include transition towards competencies-based curriculum and having teaching practices and instruction that is more in line with modern curriculum research and theory, cognitive neuroscience, and the learning sciences.

Creating curriculum and student assessment tools and resources is very time consuming and requires a lot of human resources and expertise. Additionally, teachers must be supported to use curriculum, and this too requires human and financial resources.

Understanding Curriculum **Create, Adapt & Adopt**

- **Create:** Some curriculum are developed in the NWT and include content that is specific and relevant to NWT students
- **Adapt:** Some curriculum are adapted from other jurisdictions, making changes to fit the NWT context
- **Adopt:** Other curriculum are adopted from other jurisdictions without any changes (i.e. high school mathematics)



For a small jurisdiction like the NWT, developing JK-12 curriculum for all subject areas and grades, as well as accompanying student assessment tools, is beyond the human and financial resources available.

As a result, the NWT has taken a “create/adapt/adopt” approach to curriculum development. This means where possible, ECE will create its own curriculum, but also either adapts or adopts a curriculum from another province for use in the NWT.

Create: ECE has had the opportunity to create some curricula, teachers guides and resources, in house, including:

- JK-12 Our (Indigenous) Languages (2020)
- Junior Kindergarten/Kindergarten (JK/K) (2017)
- Grade 4 Social Studies
- Grades 4-9 Health and Wellness Curriculum (draft 2021)
- Northern Studies 10 (2015)
- Experiential Science 10 – 20 – 30 (2006)
- Literacy with Information, Communications Technology (2012)
- Dene Kede (1993) and Inuuqatigiit (1996)
- Wide variety of Locally Developed Courses (in partnership with Education Bodies or with Indigenous Governments)

Adapt: Occasionally, some NWT curriculum will be adapted from other jurisdictions, making specific changes to outcomes and content to fit the NWT context. For example,

- NWT Social Studies (grades 1, 2, 3 and 5) (2012) was adapted from Manitoba

Adopt: Other NWT curriculum will be adopted from other jurisdictions without making any changes to the curriculum itself. For example:

- Alberta Math Curriculum (grades 1-9)
- Saskatchewan Arts Curriculum (grades 1-9)
- Alberta High School Curriculum (grades 10-12)

At this time, NWT schools have access to good but dated curriculum and student assessment tools. However, ECE lacks the ability to modernize the curriculum at the scale and pace required by creating new made in NWT curriculum for all JK-12 subject areas and grades. It is not feasible for the GNWT to create all JK-12 curriculum from scratch.

Understanding Curriculum

Curriculum that Meets NWT Goals

- Curriculum needs to be reflective of the cultures, languages, and identities of students in the NWT.
- Curriculum needs to be competency-based:
 - Engages student interests, ownership, and involvement
 - Relevant to student lives and meets the needs of students
 - Introduces modern skills, ideas, and attitudes that support student success and help students become capable people
 - Emphasizes critical thinking and transferable skills, as opposed to memorization



Curriculum must be reflective of the cultures, languages and identities in the NWT as this...

Curriculum that is competency-based:

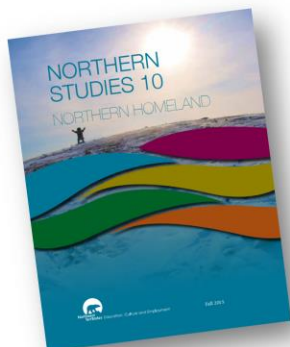
- ✓ Engages student interests, ownership, and agency. (i.e. competency-based)
- ✓ Relevant to the lives and meets the needs of students
- ✓ Introduces new modern concepts (skills, ideas, attitudes) that will support NWT students to be successful throughout their lives and become capable people
- ✓ Emphasizes critical thinking and transferable skills, as opposed to memorization.

Specific NWT Examples of competency based curriculum include:

- Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten (JK/K) play-based curriculum
- JK-12 Our Languages curriculum
- Grades 4-9 Health and Wellness Curriculum
- Northern Studies 20 course (currently being developed)

Understanding Curriculum

NWT Created Curriculum



Indigenous perspectives and worldviews in Curriculum must remain

- *Dene Kede*
- *Inuuqatigiit*
- *Our Languages* Indigenous language Curriculum
- Northern Studies 10, 20 and 30



Over many years, the NWT has worked hard to build an NWT Education system that reflects and honours the languages, cultures and worldview of the students we serve.

The current system has curriculum and programming that is foundational and cannot be replicated or replaced by any other jurisdiction.

Curriculum and any accompanying resources must be designed or adapted to make space for Indigenous worldviews, ways of knowing, and perspectives. Current research sees a great deal of alignment between Indigenous worldviews and competencies based curriculum.

The NWT has already taken steps to develop and implement territory wide curriculum and courses that allow for the worldviews and perspectives of Indigenous Peoples of the NWT to be not only included, but celebrated and foundational.

These curriculum will remain in use throughout the NWT:

Dene Kede and Inuuqatigiit will remain as foundational curricular documents for teaching and learning in the NWT. Any changes to curriculum will need to account for the use of these documents.

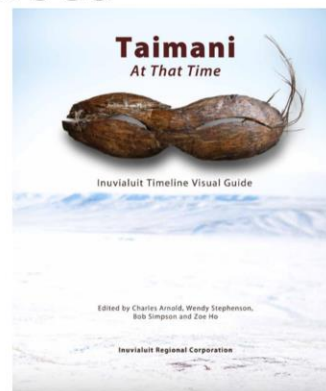
Our Languages Indigenous language Curriculum will remain as the NWTs Indigenous languages curriculum.

Northern Studies 10 will remain as a graduation require for all NWT students, and the development of **Northern Studies 20 and 30** will continue to ensure NWT students continue to learn about the treaties, land claims and histories of the NWT.

Understanding Curriculum

Locally Developed Courses

Locally Developed Courses (LDCs) allow students to earn high school credit in courses that are largely designed by their communities, regions, or Indigenous governments.

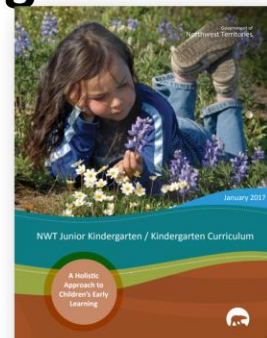


Education bodies will continue to be encouraged and supported to create Locally Developed Courses (LDCs) that meet the educational needs of the students in their specific regions.

This opportunity makes it possible for students to earn high school credits in courses that are largely designed by particular communities, regions, or Indigenous governments.

Understanding Curriculum **NWT Specific Programming**

- Play-based Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten
- Northern Distance Learning
- Indigenous language instruction
- French 1st and 2nd language instruction
- Faith-based education



NWT specific programming will remain in place, understanding that some aspects may need updating when a new curriculum is implemented, including:

Play-based Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten programming will remain in place in all schools; however, the introduction of any new grade one curriculum will require some efforts to ensure a smooth transition from Kindergarten to grade one. The JK/K curriculum and programming may need to be updated to ensure this transition is supported.

Northern Distance Learning will remain in place, understanding that there may be a change to the courses offered in this program with the implementation of a new curriculum.

Indigenous language instruction, including core and immersion programming will remain in place with continued training and support provided to Indigenous language instructors and schools to implement the new *Our Languages* curriculum.

French 1st and 2nd language programming, including core, immersion and intensive programming will remain in place, understanding that some updating may need to be done with a renewed curriculum.

Faith-based education in Yellowknife Catholic Schools will continue to be offered in identified Catholic schools.



Recent Developments in Alberta

- ECE has a long-standing relationship with Alberta Education.
- Alberta is currently renewing their curriculum and plans to roll out the K-6 curriculum beginning in the 2021-22 school year.
- NWT needs new curriculum whether its primary partner continues to be Alberta or another jurisdiction.
- Any changes to NWT curriculum would need to be carefully considered to ensure it aligns with overall NWT education goals and is best fit for NWT JK-12 students.

As the Department of ECE moving forward with any renewal of curriculum in the NWT, it is important to remember and recognize that the NWT has a long-standing relationship with Alberta Education.

Alberta has been preparing to update its own curriculum since 2009 and while this was initially well received in the NWT, the more recent pace and direction of change in Alberta curriculum changes has shifted and therefore careful consideration of adopting their new curriculum needs to be considered.

As previously mentioned, Alberta's new K-6 draft curriculum was released on March 30, 2021. They have indicated that they will roll out this curriculum with interested, voluntary schools in fall 2021.

NWT needs new curriculum whether its primary partner continues to be Alberta or another jurisdiction.

ECE has undertaken work to review the curriculum of all four Western Canadian provinces including Alberta in order to determine the degree to which they align with the NWT's goal of moving to competency-based curriculum. This work was known as "curriculum options" research and the following slides will outline what research was undertaken and what ECE has learned.



Researching Curriculum

In 2018-2020, ECE researched how best the Western Canadian provinces aligned with NWT priorities for education: British Columbia (BC), Alberta (AB), Saskatchewan (SK), and Manitoba (MB).

The following questions were asked:

1. Which of the Western Canadian provinces is the best aligned with the priorities and directions of the NWT in the areas of curriculum, assessment and other associated components of the education system?
2. Based on this information, what are the implications for the NWT of changing the relationship with Alberta or partnering with a different province?

In 2019, Malatest, a research company located in Alberta, was hired to research and evaluate the JK-12 curriculum of the Western Canadian provinces for alignment to NWT education priorities and goals.

The Western Canadian provinces were selected because of their demographics that require Indigenous representation in curricula, geographic proximity which would make professional development possible, and ECE's prior long standing working relationship within the Western Northern Canadian Protocol (WNCP) for all K-12 curriculum.

ECE conducted research that led the development of a paper to provide options to improve the outcomes of NWT JK-12 students.

This research...

- Examined how the Western Canadian provinces approached competency-based curriculum, student assessment, inclusion and reflection of Indigenous perspectives, and other key parts of the education system.
- Determined the relative alignment of each jurisdiction to NWT priorities and goals.
- Described the practical implications (risks and opportunities) of changing (or not changing) the education system in the areas examined.

Note: Costing, timelines and detailed implementation planning that might arise out of decisions based on the paper were out of scope for the project.

Researching Curriculum **Research Themes**

- Theme 1: Competency-based Curriculum (being a Capable Person)
- Theme 2: Inclusion of Indigenous Perspectives
- Theme 3: Inclusive Schooling (all children and youth belong)
- Theme 4: Large-scale Student Assessment Tools



Research Methodology

Malatest examined a sampling of curriculum and policy documents related to grades over a range of subject area documents, using a comprehensive collection of 34 NWT education priorities. These criteria represent a comprehensive collection of educational priorities of the NWT as identified through a wide range of public engagement processes from 2010 – 2019 across the NWT.

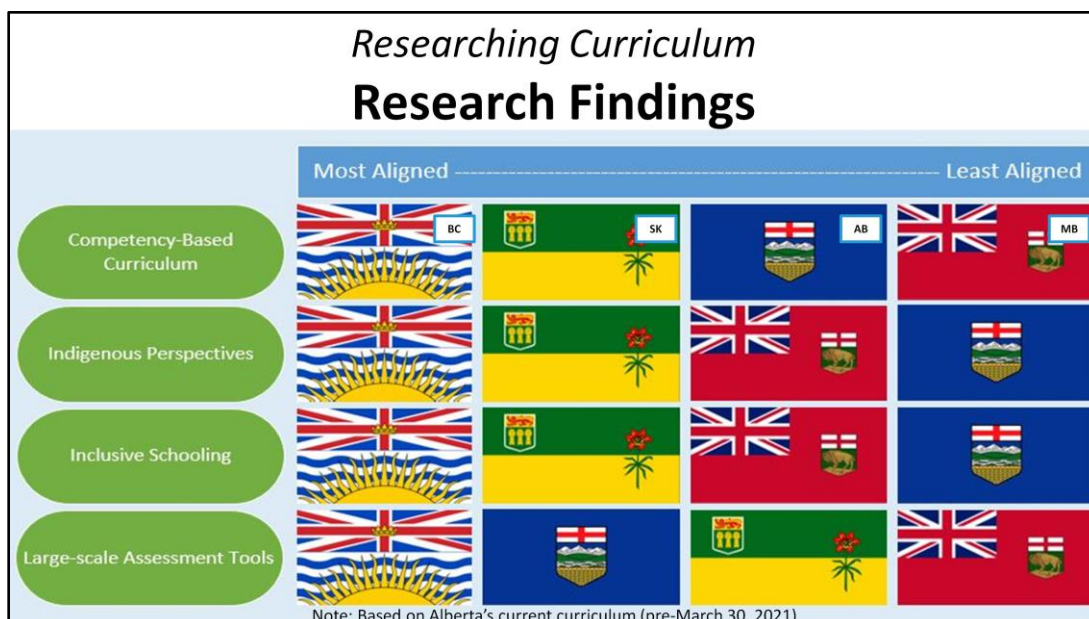
Research findings were grouped under the following themes:

Theme 1: Competency-based Curriculum - ‘Being and Becoming an NWT Capable Person’ is the core concept upon which any new NWT curriculum is developed. Competencies are over-arching and interrelated organizers that help a person both ‘know’ and ‘do’. They include, but are more than just, skills and values, and put less value on facts and skills taught out of context. What students need to know and do in this kind of curriculum includes knowing how to make choices and how to use their resources in changing situations. Competencies allow a capable person to navigate in the bush as well as to deal with a new problem in a school or work situation. A competency-based approach to curriculum is now almost universal in education systems today.

Theme 2: Inclusion of Indigenous Perspectives – Since the beginning of the territorial government’s responsibility for education in the NWT in 1967, there has been a consistent vision that K-12 curriculum and teaching and student resources used in NWT schools need to reflect the Indigenous people of this place. Indigenous perspectives on learning, doing and being as well as Indigenous content visible in curriculum and learning materials, and intentional efforts towards school-community-Indigenous government relationship building and reconciliation, are key aspects of education in the NWT.

Theme 3: Inclusive Schooling - Inclusive schooling is a foundational part of the NWT’s education system. Supporting access to education for all JK-12 children and youth including diverse learners and particularly students with complex needs and exceptionalities represents a major part of the NWT education system. In the NWT, a large percentage of the JK-12 student population requires additional supports and interventions. Funding and support approaches must adequately and appropriately meet the territory’s needs.

Theme 4: Large-scale Student Assessment Tools – For public assurance purposes, education systems must have the means to monitor the degree to which JK-12 students are learning what they are expected to learn. The NWT is keenly aware that with small student numbers, territorially-developed standardized testing will always be a challenge. For most large-scale student assessment, the NWT must use externally developed student assessment tools developed by other jurisdictions, none of which necessarily align perfectly with NWT curricular outcomes, but have been chosen according to best match.



The analysis led to ECE ranking each of the provinces against the major themes outlined above in order to determine the degree to which the JK-12 curriculum was compatible with NWT needs.

In all four themes that were examined, weighted and ranked, **British Columbia was the most closely aligned to the NWT's priorities.**

It is important to note that the Alberta curriculum evaluated in the jurisdictional scan is the current curriculum in place (not the revised drafts). When it becomes available, ECE will need to review the new Alberta curriculum using the same research methodology and criteria as in the jurisdictional scan.

Theme 1: Competency-based Curriculum. BC has implemented a systemically-renewed K-12 curriculum over the past 4 years, including assessment tools and approaches.

Theme 2: Inclusion of Indigenous Perspectives.

BC was consistently the strongest of the 5 jurisdictions examined. Partnerships in the development of their new curriculum including the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) and the BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF) were particularly strong. Commitment to Indigenous perspectives was strong and reflected in materials and assessment tools.

Theme 3: Inclusive Schooling.

The inter-jurisdictional scan results, conversations with key Ministry personnel, and current practice in the NWT in the area of inclusive learning find the highest alignment for the NWT to be with BC. The NWT is already using many materials from BC as there is strong alignment with our territory.

Theme 4: Large-scale Student Assessment Tools.

BC's programming in the area of large-scale student assessments would provide student achievement data at grade 4 and 7 in reading, writing, and numeracy. It would also provide data at grade 10 and 12 for literacy and numeracy.

Researching Curriculum

Areas for Further Investigation

Building on the research that has been done to date, ECE has further questions and areas to investigate before making a decision about the JK – 12 curriculum.

- Ease of adapting or adopting curriculum to reflect local cultures and context of the NWT;
- Student assessment tools and student resources;
- Compatibility with student information systems;
- Student Online and Distance Learning programs; and
- School Staff Professional Development.



The areas for further investigation include the questions that ECE is still researching or hopes to find the answer to, which will help inform decisions made in the future.

ECE needs to understand clearly how, and if, a new curriculum can be adapted to reflect local cultures and context of the NWT. The following questions will try to get at this answer:

1. *Will the NWT be able to adapt a new curriculum?*
2. *Will the new curriculum require significant adaptations or can portions of the curriculum be adopted as is?*
3. *Will the new curriculum require changes to NWT graduation requirements and high school programming?*

ECE needs to understand the implications and costs related to accessing large-scale student assessment tools, classroom assessments and teaching resources. The following questions will try to get at this answer:

1. *Can the NWT access large-scale student assessment tools and if so, what is the cost?*
2. *How are JK-12 students assessed or evaluated in the classroom?*
3. *Do they have a student assessment strategy or protocol that the NWT can access and if so, what are the costs?*
4. *What JK-12 teaching resources will accompany the new curriculum and what are the costs of these resources?*

ECE uses two different student information systems and would need to understand if either of these systems would need to change with the implementation of a new curriculum. The following questions will try to get at this answer:

1. *Is the student information system compatible with the NWT's current systems?*
2. *Would the NWT be required to use a different system? If so, at what cost?*

ECE will need to understand what online or distance education programs are offered and access implications for NWT students. The following questions will try to get at this answer:

1. *Does the jurisdiction offer online or distance education courses?*
2. *If so, can the NWT access these courses and what are the associated costs?*
3. *What changes (if any) would need to be made to NWT Northern Distance Learning (NDL) to accommodate the shift to a new curriculum?*

ECE needs to understand the implications, opportunities and costs related to accessing professional development (PD) opportunities and supports. The following questions will try to get at this answer:

1. *What access would NWT school staff have to PD opportunities?*
2. *What degree of support could the NWT school staff expect?*
3. *What costs are associated with accessing these PD and/or supports?*



Proposed Timeline

- Engagement & Consultation: April - mid June 2021
- Review of Alberta's new DRAFT K-6 curriculum: end of May 2021
- *What We Heard* Report: end of June/ early July 2021
- Making a Decision: end of August / Early September 2021
- Curriculum Implementation Planning, Communications and Training 2021-2022 School Year (Sept 2021-June 2022)
- Tentative grade 1-12 Curriculum Implementation beginning 2022-2023 School Year – proposed phased-in approach.

ECE will be completing formal consultation with Indigenous Governments and engagement with key educational partners during the spring of 2021 (April –mid June 2021). The public will have the opportunity to provide feedback and comments on JK- 12 curriculum renewal through an online form on the ECE website.

The new Alberta K-6 curriculum will be reviewed by Malatest, the company who conducted the original research. The review will be completed before a decision is made; the target completion date (end of May 2021) is subject to the availability of Malatest.

Once consultation and engagement are complete, ECE will draft a *What We Heard* Report, summarizing information, questions, and concern heard during discussions.

The *What We Heard Report* will be shared with participants for their review and comment. ECE will revise the report based on feedback from participants. A final report will be distributed at the end of June 2021. Along with internal research and investigation, the *What We Heard Report* will inform the decisions about the NWT JK- 12 curriculum and future partnerships. It is anticipated that a decision will be made about the NWT JK – 12 curriculum in August 2021 by the Minister of ECE.

Implementation Planning, Communications and Teacher Training including subject advisory groups: 2021-2022 School year (Sept 2021-June 2022)

The timeline for implementation of a new curriculum is being proposed to begin in the 2022-2023 school year, and likely to be a phased-in approach.

ECE is committed to supporting teachers, administrators, school staff and education bodies throughout the curriculum renewal process. This will include clear messaging for parents and families about the process and implications for students.



Before Making a Decision

- Renewing curriculum is a significant decision and requires careful research and comprehensive planning once a decision is made.
- Although the research has pointed to strong alignment with BC, before a decision can be made more information is needed to understand the implications of such a change, including the review of Alberta's new K-6 curriculum.
- ECE is engaging with Indigenous governments, Education Bodies, and the Northwest Territories Teachers' Association for their input, perspectives, and insights on the following discussion points.
- The public will have the opportunity to provide input and feedback via the ECE website @ www.ece.gov.nt.ca

Although preliminary research is pointing to a strong alignment with BC, more conversation and exploration is needed before making a decision to change jurisdictional partners, this includes reviewing Alberta's new K-6 curriculum.

This is a large undertaking that requires the input and consideration of Indigenous Governments, Education Bodies, and the Northwest Territories Teachers' Association.

As our partners, we would like you to be aware of the questions we are asking, and request you flag any questions or concerns that you would like ECE to address in our upcoming continued investigation/research from April –June 2021.

The public can now provide input on JK-12 curriculum renewal through the ECE website @ www.ece.gov.nt.ca

Questions and Comments

- What ideas, questions, concerns do you have?
- What issues need to be considered in a potential partnership?
- Have we missed anything?

Contact us at:

NWTCurriculum_Renewal@gov.nt.ca



In addition to preliminary research, more discussion and exploration is needed before making a decision. This is a large project that requires the input of Indigenous Governments, Education Bodies, and the NWTTA.

At this time, we would like to encourage you, as representatives, to bring forward questions, concerns, and comments regarding the renewal of the NWT JK – 12 curriculum.

Information, questions and concerns gathered through discussions with ECE will inform future decisions about education in the NWT.

- *What ideas, questions, concerns do you have?*
- *What issues need to be addressed in a potential partnership?*
- *Have we missed anything (discussion points, generally)?*

Further questions, comments, and ideas can be sent to: NWTCurriculum_renewal@gov.nt.ca