

Education Bulletin and FAQ

JK-12 Curriculum Renewal



The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) is pleased to begin implementing a new adapted curriculum in Northwest Territories (NWT) Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12 (JK-12) classrooms!

The decision to transition to British Columbia's curriculum came after years of research and consultation. We found that BC most aligned with the NWT's priorities for education. So, you could say it was a very "educated" decision! Here's why:

- BC is one of the top performers in education among all the provinces, according to the Conference Board of Canada.
- BC's curriculum is modernized to meet the needs of students in a world that's always changing! It incorporates financial literacy skills, begins providing career education in the early grades, and teaches students the ability to design, make, acquire, and apply skills and technologies that are important in the world today and key for the future.
- The BC curriculum is one of the first in Canada to focus on competency-driven learning that builds on students' natural curiosity and creativity. It's based on research and best practices in education, and most educators agree this is essential for 21st-century learning.
- Indigenous worldviews, knowledge, and perspectives are reflected in all BC's curricula and in mandatory learning for all students.
- Research shows that this new curriculum design and structure has better academic results for students.
- BC has confirmed that their graduates are competitive at the post-secondary level in universities and colleges across the country and internationally.

BC's education system is well regarded as a high-performing system. This all results in students being more prepared for life after high school!

What does competency-driven learning mean?

In curriculum, "competency" is a learning expectation that connects a student's skills, knowledge and values. It's the ability to do something successfully.

BC's curriculum puts a focus on essential learning – life skills, concepts and strategies students can use after high school. Literacy and numeracy are at its core – not just reading, writing, math and numbers, but also to critically analyze and communicate orally, in writing and visually, and to apply mathematical concepts and solve problems in a variety of contexts.

It supports students to be competent thinkers and communicators, who are personally and socially competent in all areas of their lives.

“Know-Do-Understand” model

The “Know-Do-Understand” model of curriculum design has three elements that all work together to support deeper learning. Students will learn and be assessed based on: what they **know (the content)**; what skills and strategies they are able to **do (the curricular competencies)**; and what principles, ideas and concepts they **understand (the Big Ideas)**.

*What content (definitions, rules, facts and information) do students need to **know**, and what skills (problem solve, research, communicate) do they need to **do**, to help **understand** bigger theories, principles and concepts?*

For example, in learning a new math formula – a student may know the key words and purpose of the equation, and follow the steps to solve the equation and get the correct answer, but they may not actually understand how they got to that answer.

How is competency-driven learning different from the previous curriculum the NWT used?

The ‘old way’ of instruction often saw teachers presenting factual and historical information in front of a classroom and/or giving students facts and dates to memorize.

This modern curriculum focuses on deeper learning, which happens through “doing” rather than passively reading or listening. It builds on students’ curiosity – it encourages them to get involved in their own education through interactive and engaging activities and asking questions.

What is an example of competency-driven learning?

For example, in the Northern Studies course, instead of simply reading and hearing about treaty negotiations, students may take part in a treaty simulation over several days.

Students will learn about the different roles governments and participants play, protocols for working with Elders, Knowledge Keepers and advisors. They will then take on roles and work on teams to write and present a proposal, and come to a consensus based on their understanding of the issues.

The outcome aims to see students: learn the history of modern treaties and their negotiation and implementation (**know**); build skills in leadership, public speaking, conducting research, problem solving, communicating and presenting ideas (**do**); and appreciate how Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives shape politics and culture, and respect those different values and worldviews (**understand**).

Will the new curriculum be relevant to students in the NWT?

Yes! The BC curriculum is adaptable, so ECE is working with subject-matter experts and educators, including Indigenous Government representatives, from across the territory to make sure every subject fits the context of the NWT, its people, cultures, languages and history.

Indigenous knowledge and local courses

The curriculum is also very flexible, so that means educators can blend in local cultural, geographical and historical knowledge and resources at the classroom and school level. In addition, Dene Kede and Inuuqatigiit will remain in schools. These foundational curricula weave Dene and Inuit core concepts, language and traditions into learning in NWT classrooms. NWT-created curriculum, such as Our Languages, Northern Studies, Health and Wellness, Hunter Education and Junior Kindergarten/Kindergarten, will also remain in schools.

What's the difference between "draft," "trial" and "full" implementation?

"**Trialing**" means schools have the choice to try one, some, or all subject areas of the "**draft**" curriculum in specific grades. It's expected that all teachers trial at least one subject in these grades to ensure all teachers and students are introduced to the new style of curriculum.

This will be a small-scale pilot where feedback will be integrated into an *updated* draft of the curriculum that will be provided for all schools to use in the next year.

Eventually, over the several year timeline, schools will implement the updated draft curriculum. This will be a large-scale pilot where additional feedback will be used to inform a *final* version of the NWT-adapted curriculum before it goes to the Minister of Education for approval.

Once the final version is approved, the new curriculum will be **fully** implemented in all grades and subjects across the NWT. That is expected in the 2027-28 school year.

Why don't you roll out the whole new curriculum at once?

The NWT is implementing the curriculum gradually over several years to give everyone a chance to get used to it. This approach is what our education partners, including teachers, asked us to do, and it's how BC implemented this curriculum when it was new to them.

This is a significant change for schools and educators, so teachers will start 'triaリング' the new curriculum over the next several years. Triaリング gives everyone a chance to get used to these changes, so no one is overwhelmed by the transition.

How do I know if/when my child is taking part in the trial?

The ECE website (ece.gov.nt.ca/en/curriculumrenewal) has a timeline for implementing the new curriculum over the next several years, including what grades will be impacted when.

Schools and education bodies can trial one, some or all of the subjects over several grades and years. As such, the school or education bodies will provide a breakdown of how they are implementing the draft curriculum each school year.

My child is going to trial the new curriculum – what does this mean for them?

That is great news! They're going to get an opportunity to be among the first students in the NWT to learn this new, modern curriculum. This type of learning sets students up for success. It immerses students in their own education and gives them a chance to take part and guide their learning. They can ask questions and raise ideas about what *they* think students in the NWT need to know, do and understand to be capable citizens.

It is up to each [education body](#) (i.e., Yellowknife Catholic Schools or Beaufort-Delta Divisional Education Council) and/or school/region to decide what subjects they will trial of the draft curriculum over the next couple years. They will have more information on these plans in the coming months, which will be shared with families.

My child is NOT going to trial the BC curriculum – will they be at a disadvantage?

No, your child will not be at any disadvantage. There is nothing wrong with the existing curriculum; NWT students are and have been successful with the current curriculum. The new curriculum is an opportunity to improve and do even better!

The new curriculum is well-suited for **all** learners, regardless of where each student is in their learning. It's based on research and best practices nationally and globally that put an emphasis on the student's role in learning, including the benefits of instruction that's based on play, projects and inquiries/questions. This all leads to learning that is interactive and engaging, emphasizing the student's role in learning, based on questions or ideas they want to explore.

Many educators in the NWT are already using this approach in classrooms, so the curriculum is actually just catching up to these great teaching methods.

My child is/will be in high school when the new curriculum is trialed/implemented, will this impact their graduation?

As the NWT works toward transitioning to British Columbia's competency-driven model of learning, the new graduation requirements will be quite similar to BC's, as most jurisdictions across Canada have similar requirements to earn a high school diploma.

The NWT's graduation requirements will have some small but deliberate differences, such as the inclusion of made-in-the-NWT courses like Northern Studies. The NWT will be moving from a 5-credit to 4-credit system and the new requirements will see more courses around career education than previously, which encourages students to start planning for their futures!

- The NWT's new graduation requirements will take effect when the draft curriculum is implemented for Grade 10 students in the **2024-25 school year**.
- From that point on, all Grade 10 students will use the new graduation requirements.

- Anyone in Grade 11 or 12 in the 2024-25 school year will continue to use the graduation requirements that were set when they started high school.

You can find more information the minimum graduation requirements here:

- [FAQ on new graduation requirements](#)
- [Breakdown of requirements in current and upcoming systems](#)

Will my child/children need all new textbooks?

Teaching resources, such as textbooks, will not need to be replaced. BC's curriculum was designed without the need for required resources or textbooks, so schools and teachers will be able to use resources currently in schools. However, as teachers develop lessons, additional teaching resources may be identified, developed and shared.

Are report cards going to change?

Eventually, yes. It's expected that report cards will be designed to provide NWT parents/guardians with the information they need to support their child's learning.

ECE and education bodies will provide communications to parents/guardians about these changes.

It is also envisioned that schools and education districts will eventually transition to a series of common report cards used across the NWT.

How much training will teachers get in the new curriculum? Will there be more PD days?

ECE has released its [teacher training plan](#) as the NWT transitions to the BC curriculum over several years.

It will include face-to-face training opportunities, opportunities to network with colleagues, and a suite of online courses [through ConnectED](#) that teachers will be able to access at their convenience.

ECE and superintendents have committed to providing one day per year for the next three years, from the existing teacher training days, to be dedicated to training for implementing the new curriculum. Education bodies will determine the best approach for their schools, when developing their 2023-24 school year calendar.

You can find more on the [teacher training plan in this FAQ](#).

My family has feedback or questions about the new curriculum – who do we contact?

If you have questions, concerns or feedback about the new curriculum, you can email NWTCurriculum_renewal@gov.nt.ca.

More information

Department of Education, Culture and Employment | www.ece.gov.nt.ca/en/curriculumrenewal