Government of
Northwest Territories

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS IN *INCLUSIVE SCHOOLING REVIEW: FINAL REPORT*

February 2026

Management Response to Recommendations in *Inclusive Schooling Review: Final Report*

Executive Summary: Inclusive Schooling Review Final Report

Background

In 2016, the *NWT Ministerial Directive on Inclusive Schooling* (the Ministerial Directive, or Directive) was renewed with a focus on providing quality inclusive education to the diverse student population of the Northwest Territories (NWT). The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE, the Department) is responsible for the monitoring, evaluation, and overall accountability of inclusive schooling in the NWT. In 2020, the Office of the Auditor General of Canada *Report on Early Childhood to Grade 12 Education in the Northwest Territories* stated that ECE's monitoring of inclusive schooling did not provide sufficient information about whether students on individualized learning plans received the necessary support and services, or how this affected their outcomes. In response to this finding, ECE committed to conducting a review of inclusive schooling in the NWT.

Evaluation Design

To fulfil this commitment, ECE's Planning, Research and Information Management (PRIM) Division carried out the Inclusive Schooling Review from 2024-25 to 2025-26, using a phased approach. Phase 1, completed in Fall 2024, involved reviewing existing data, including a jurisdictional scan of inclusive schooling plan types, and a document review of education bodies' Inclusive Schooling Compliance Reporting Tools and Operating Plans/Annual Reports; and ECE's JK-12 Performance Measures Reports. Phase 2 involved primary data collection with inclusive schooling partners from April to June 2025, in person and virtually.

The evaluation was guided by the following four questions:

1. How can inclusive schooling be defined in the NWT?
2. To what extent are inclusive schooling practices in the NWT meeting the needs of NWT students?
    a. What do students and families need, expect, and want from inclusive schooling practices in the NWT?
    b. To what extent do students' and families' experiences of inclusive schooling practices meet their needs, expectations, and wants?
3. What are the successes and barriers to inclusive schooling planning, implementation, and monitoring?
    a. What are the successes and barriers to effectively planning and implementing student supports?
    b. What are the successes and barriers to effectively monitoring student supports?
4. To what extent are inclusive schooling practices in the NWT supported by Jordan's Principle and Inuit Child First Initiative funding?

Evaluation Methods

Following the review of existing data in Phase 1 of the Review in 2024, evaluators from the PRIM Division collected data from inclusive schooling partners from April to June 2025, in person and virtually. This included surveys, interviews, focus groups, and data interpretation meetings. The review gathered feedback from support assistants, classroom teachers, program support teachers, principals, regional inclusive schooling coordinators, superintendents, and ECE Education and Early Childhood staff.

Results

1. ***How can inclusive schooling be defined in the NWT?***

Many participants agreed that the definition and vision for inclusive schooling included in the Directive reflected what inclusive schooling means to them. However, implementing inclusive schooling with this vision can be difficult to achieve in practice. Participants also expressed confusion around the concept of the "common learning environment," stating that students' needs might not always be best addressed within a classroom. Participants suggested expanding the definition and vision to include realities that are important for schooling in the North, such as the importance of mental health and cultural inclusivity.

2. ***To what extent are inclusive schooling practices in the NWT meeting the needs of NWT students?***
    a. ***What do students and families need, expect, and want from inclusive schooling practices in the NWT?***

    With regards to the inclusive schooling needs, expectations, and wants of families in the NWT, while many parents and guardians described positive experiences and appreciation for the inclusive schooling programs and supports offered by the school, they also expressed that the available supports do not always meet the needs of their children.

    b. ***To what extent do students' and families' experiences of inclusive schooling practices meet their needs, expectations, and wants?***

    Several parents and guardians stated that their children were building strong relationships and receiving the support that they needed. In addition, parents and guardians experienced strong communication and opportunities to discuss their children's support plans and goals with educators. However, a lack of access to specialist services, systems navigation supports, and inclusive schooling resources were identified as gaps in meeting their children's learning needs. Parents and guardians want consistent access to rehabilitation services, classroom supports, inclusive spaces and activities, and opportunities for their children to grow and experience a sense of belonging at school.

3. ***What are the successes and barriers to inclusive schooling planning, implementation, and monitoring?***

    a. ***What are the successes and barriers to effectively planning and implementing student supports?***

    The review found several successes and barriers related to inclusive schooling planning and implementation. Educators described seeing an increase in complexity and diversity of needs in their schools, which poses challenges to meeting students' needs. Collaboration among staff was identified as a strength for planning and implementing inclusive schooling; however, barriers such as a lack of time and lack of understanding and clarity on inclusive schooling roles, responsibilities, and authority can get in the way of effectively

collaborating to plan and deliver student supports. Staff knowledge of inclusive schooling was also identified as a barrier, with participants expressing a desire for more collaborative, inter-regional learning opportunities to build upon the strengths and knowledge that exist within the territory. The lack of access to specialist services in the NWT was identified as a significant barrier to address in order to ensure more consistent, timely, and integrated support for the diverse needs of the student population. Clear processes for inclusive schooling plan types and transitions into, within, and out of the school system were also identified as priorities.

b. What are the successes and barriers to effectively monitoring student supports?

With regards to monitoring inclusive schooling, the review found that the existing mechanisms that the Department uses to fulfill its monitoring and evaluation responsibilities (education bodies' Operating Plans and Annual Reports) lack indicators to assess the quality or effectiveness of inclusive schooling practices across the territory. Participants described challenges with monitoring at the school and regional levels, including lack of time and lack of monitoring systems in place. Further work is needed to develop a monitoring framework and methods for inclusive schooling that are realistic and that capture the diverse perspectives of education partners, including students and families.

4. To what extent are inclusive schooling practices in the NWT supported by Jordan's Principle and Inuit Child First Initiative funding?

Due to a lack of detailed data on Jordan's Principle and Inuit Child First Initiative expenditures, the review team was not able to assess the extent to which these funds specifically support inclusive schooling in the territory. However, during engagement with educators and families, the review team heard that schools largely rely on these funds to support their inclusive schooling programs, and many are concerned about the impacts of cuts and/or changes to these funding programs. Participants also described concerns with the inclusive schooling funding formula administered by ECE and its ability to meet the needs experienced within NWT schools. Despite the large amount of funds accessed by education bodies from Jordan's Principle and Inuit Child First Initiative, there are still gaps in the education system's ability to meet students' needs. In addition to addressing funding gaps, systems transformation is required to address the challenges identified by educators and families through this review.

Recommendation 1: Revise the inclusive schooling definition in the Ministerial Directive. This should include clarifying the meaning and application of the "common learning environment," including its scope beyond the classroom, and integrating key elements identified by participants such as mental health, life skills, and flexible learning environments.	***AGREE*** The Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, under her legislated authority to issue direction to education bodies, intends to consider revisions to the inclusive schooling definition in the Ministerial Directive on Inclusive Schooling. ECE will support the Minister by providing analysis, engagement, and implementation guidance to ensure the definition reflects current educational realities and supports consistent understanding and application across the JK-12 system. The Inclusive Schooling Review identified varying interpretations of "inclusive schooling" and the drivers of inclusive schooling, including curriculum alignment, instructional practice, and the role of the common learning environment, particularly regarding whether this concept applies solely to the classroom or more broadly to the school environment. While the common learning environment is an important context, inclusion is achieved through curriculum-aligned, evidence-informed instruction across a continuum of environments. The concept of the 'common learning environment' will be clarified to explicitly allow flexible placements, including alternative or specialized settings when necessary to ensure safety, therapeutic access, and effective learning.

	Updating the definition will promote a shared understanding among educators, school leaders, and education bodies, and strengthen consistent application of inclusive schooling expectations. Participants also identified the importance of mental health, community living skills, and flexibility in learning environments as integral to meeting diverse student needs. Using participation-focused, strengths-based language will further reflect students as active learners and future community members. ECE will provide advice and support to the Minister to ensure any updated remains relevant, evidence-informed, and responsive to the social, cultural, and geographic contexts of NWT schools.
Management Response **Planned Management Action**	The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) will: 1. Advise the Minister on revisions to the definition in the Ministerial Directive. • ECE will prepare options for the Minister that clarify the meaning and application of the “common learning environment” (including its scope beyond the classroom) and integrate key elements identified through the Review (e.g. mental health, life skills, flexible learning environments). 2. Engage education bodies, where appropriate, to confirm clarity and usability. • ECE will seek input from education bodies on how the revised definition will be understood and applied in diverse school contexts, ensuring practicality and alignment with existing roles and responsibilities. 3. Align supporting guidance to support implementation. • Where needed, ECE will update related guidance (e.g. Inclusive Schooling Guidelines, companion tools) to reflect the revised definition and support consistent use across the JK-12 system.
Timeframe	**2026–27** • Provide options and analysis to the Minister; engage education bodies to support clarity and practical application. **2027-28** • Pending the Minister’s decision, finalize and implement the revised definition and update associated guidance to support consistent implementation across the JK-12 system.

Recommendation 2: Develop resources and supports to aid parents and guardians with navigating inclusive schooling supports and services. This could include the development of a plain-language guide to explain supports (for example, plan types, access to Support Assistants, and rehabilitation services) and establishing a systems-navigator to assist families and schools.	***AGREE*** The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) agrees that families benefit from clear, accessible information and supports to help them understand and navigate inclusive schooling within the JK–12 education system, and that strengthening this area will support more equitable access to inclusive schooling supports across the Northwest Territories. Clear information supports family engagement and trust. The Inclusive Schooling Review found that while many families value strong relationships with schools, navigating inclusive schooling supports and services can be complex and overwhelming, particularly for families with limited system knowledge or who are new to the education system. Providing clear, plain-language information supports meaningful family engagement and shared understanding. ECE recognizes that inclusive schooling involves multiple roles, processes, and interfaces within the JK–12 system, and that families' ability to navigate these supports varies. Strengthening navigation supports – while respecting existing school-based relationships – will help reduce inequities and improve consistency in family experiences across education bodies. This work will respect the roles and relationships of schools and education bodies as primary points of contact for families and will not replace or duplicate school-based engagement or decision-making within the JK–12 system.-.
Management Response **Planned Management Action**	The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) will: 1. Develop accessible, plain language resources to help parents and guardians understand inclusive schooling supports within the JK–12 system, including support plan types, roles of inclusive schooling staff, and how supports are accessed and reviewed. • ECE will work with education bodies, as appropriate, to ensure that family-facing resources are practical, accurate, and reflective of how inclusive schooling operates across diverse NWT contexts, including small schools and regional centres. • Resources will be designed to complement, not replace, communication between schools and families. Work with education bodies to ensure relevance and usability. 2. Explore feasible approaches to navigation support. • ECE will explore options to strengthen navigation support for families that build on existing roles and structures, with the goal of improving coordination and clarity without creating additional administrative burden or duplicating responsibilities held by schools or education bodies. 3. Align resources with broader inclusive schooling improvements. • ECE will align family-facing resources and navigation supports with other inclusive schooling initiatives, including revisions to plan types, transition protocols, and monitoring frameworks, to support consistent messaging and understanding across the system.

Timeframe	**2026-27** • Develop plain-language inclusive schooling resources for families. • Engage education bodies to review and refine materials for clarity, accuracy, and usability. • Explore feasible approaches to strengthening navigation support within the JK-12 system. **2027-28** • Finalize and implement family-facing resources. • Implement selected navigation support approaches and adjust as needed based on feedback and system capacity.
Recommendation 3: Develop a territory-wide inclusive schooling staffing approach that better reflects the realities of inclusive schooling and ensures alignment between staffing levels and inclusive schooling expectations. This should include establishing a minimum staffing ratio for inclusive schooling staff; clarifying inclusive schooling roles, responsibilities, and authorities; and contingency planning for staff turnover.	***AGREE*** The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) agrees that a territory-wide inclusive schooling staffing approach is required to better align staffing levels, roles, and expectations with the realities of inclusive schooling across the JK–12 system. Inclusive schooling expectations must be supported by appropriate staffing structures. The Inclusive Schooling Review identified increasing complexity of student needs and significant pressure on inclusive schooling staff, including Program Support Teachers, Support Assistants, and Regional Inclusive Schooling Coordinators. Strengthening alignment between staffing models and inclusive schooling expectations is necessary to support effective implementation and safe, supportive learning environments. Clarity and consistency support effective collaboration and sustainability. Variability in how inclusive schooling roles, responsibilities, and authorities are understood and applied has contributed to implementation challenges. A clearer, territory-wide approach – developed in collaboration with education bodies – will support shared understanding, continuity of practice, and more consistent support for educators and students.
Management Response **Planned Management Action**	The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) will: 1. Develop a territory-wide inclusive schooling staffing framework. • ECE will work with education bodies to develop a staffing approach that reflects the realities of inclusive schooling in the NWT, including consideration of baseline staffing expectations, regional variability, and the differing needs of small, medium, and large schools.

	2. Clarify inclusive schooling roles, responsibilities, and authorities. • ECE will review and clarify territorial guidance related to inclusive schooling roles – including Program Support Teachers, Support Assistants, Regional Inclusive Schooling Coordinators, and school leadership – to support shared understanding, effective collaboration, and consistent implementation across the system. 3. Analyze ratios and flexibility. • ECE will analyze options related to territorial expectations for inclusive schooling staff – including scenarios that model different baseline approaches – informed by evidence, education body input, and system capacity. Any changes to staffing expectations would be subject to available resources, employer authorities, and required GNWT approvals; the analysis will identify approaches that allow flexibility for local context and student needs. 4. Strengthen contingency planning for staffing continuity. • ECE will work with education bodies to identify approaches that support continuity of inclusive schooling support during periods of staff turnover or vacancies, recognizing the recruitment and retention challenges present in the NWT. *Note: Any future adjustments to staffing expectations or funding mechanisms will be considered by the Minister and the GNWT through established planning and approval processes and are not pre-determined by this management response.*
Timeframe	**2026-27** • Engage education bodies to identify staffing pressures, role clarity issues, and priority areas for improvement. • Develop options for a territory-wide inclusive schooling staffing framework (including scenarios for baseline expectations and flexibility). • Prepare advice for the Minister on potential updates to territorial expectations for inclusive schooling staffing (including roles/authorities guidance), for consideration. **2027-28** • Subject to the Minister's direction and required GNWT approvals, finalize the selected approach and plan a phased implementation with education bodies. • Support education bodies in applying any approved territorial guidance in a way that is manageable and aligned with local context. • Update the Inclusive Schooling Guidelines and related materials as needed to reflect approved changes. *Note: Any adjustments with funding implications will proceed through established business planning and approval processes prior to implementation.*

Recommendation 4: Improve support and coordination for professional learning and capacity building in collaboration with Education Bodies. This includes establishing opportunities for inter-regional collaboration to support educators through sharing inclusive schooling practices, challenges, and solutions that are grounded in NWT realities.	***AGREE*** The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) agrees that strong instructional capacity and shared professional learning are essential to strengthening inclusive schooling practices across the JK–12 system and to supporting educators in meeting increasingly diverse student -needs. Building supports are essential to strengthening inclusive schooling practices across the JK–12 system and to supporting educators in meeting increasingly diverse student needs. Effective inclusive schooling depends on educator professional judgment, curriculum alignment, and the ability to adapt instruction based on evidence of student learning, rather than on centralized or prescriptive training. The Inclusive Schooling Review identified variability in educators' access to professional learning and opportunities to build practical knowledge related to inclusive schooling. Strengthening coordination and collaboration will support more consistent understanding and application of inclusive schooling practices across regions and school contexts. Professional learning is most effective when it is educator led, sustained over time, and grounded in local context. Educators emphasized the value of learning from peers who understand the realities of northern, remote, small, and multigrade school contexts. Interregional collaboration provides opportunities to share practical strategies, challenges, and solutions that are relevant and immediately applicable within NWT -schools. This work will respect the roles of education bodies as employers and will focus on coordination, facilitation, and shared learning rather than centralized delivery or prescriptive training requirements. Professional learning efforts will prioritize instructional capacity over generalized "inclusion training," recognizing limited instructional time and the expectation that professionals can independently access materials and apply locally developed procedures.
Management Response **Planned Management Action**	The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) will: 1. Strengthen coordination of inclusive schooling professional learning. • ECE will work with education bodies to improve coordination of inclusive schooling related professional learning and capacity building efforts, with the goal of reducing duplication and improving access to relevant learning opportunities across the territory. • Refocus professional learning to instructional capacity, shifting emphasis from broad "inclusive schooling training" to strengthening curriculum and instructional capacity. 2. Support inter-regional collaboration and knowledge sharing. • ECE will support opportunities for educators and inclusive schooling staff to engage in interregional collaboration, including sharing effective practices, problem solving approaches, and lessons learned that are grounded in NWT realities.

	3. Leverage existing structures and expertise. • To ensure sustainability, ECE will prioritize the use of existing forums, networks, and professional learning structures, and will draw on the expertise of educators, Regional Inclusive Schooling Coordinators, and other system leaders to support peer-to-peer learning. 4. Align professional learning with broader inclusive schooling initiatives. • Review alignment between inclusive schooling expectations and the GNWT Standards of Teacher Practice to reinforce educator professional judgment and practice. • ECE will align professional learning and capacity-building efforts with other inclusive schooling work (e.g., revisions to plan types, staffing approaches, and transition protocols) to support coherence and consistent messaging across the system.
Timeframe	**2026-27** • Engage education bodies to identify priorities and opportunities for improved coordination of inclusive schooling professional learning. • Identify opportunities for and support interregional collaboration and knowledge-sharing activities. **2027-28** • Continue to refine coordinated professional learning and inter-regional collaboration efforts based on feedback and system capacity. • Align learning activities with evolving inclusive schooling policies and guidance.
Recommendation 5: Work with the Department of Health and Social Services and the NWT health authorities to improve access to specialist services (e.g., assessment and rehabilitation services) by focusing on integrated service delivery models and reducing wait times for assessments and therapies. This includes working across the education and health systems to define roles, responsibilities and communication	***AGREE*** The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) agrees that improved coordination with health system partners is important to strengthening access to specialist services that support inclusive schooling outcomes for JK–12 students. Further to recent joint direction from the Minister of Health and Social Services and the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment to explore improvements to school-aged rehabilitation services, ECE will continue working collaboratively – within existing departmental authorities – to advance practical improvements in how services interface between JK-12 Education and Health and Social Services. Access to assessment and rehabilitation services remains a system pressure. The Inclusive Schooling Review highlights long wait times, limited availability, and coordination challenges that directly affect schools' ability to plan and implement supports. Clarifying pathways and improving communication with health partners will help schools and families navigate services more effectively. In many NWT communities, schools function as the primary service hub for children and families.

protocols for service referrals and follow-up, and explore platforms for tracking student referrals, assessments and service delivery.	There is shared readiness to explore improvements within existing mandates. Building on joint ministerial direction to explore improvements to school-aged rehabilitation services, ECE and Health & Social Services are engaged in early planning discussions to identify practical coordination improvements that respect each department's mandate and decision-making processes.
Management Response **Planned Management Action**	The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) will: 1. Advance coordinated interface work with health partners (planning stage). • ECE will continue planning discussions with the Department of Health and Social Services and NWT health authorities to identify near-term coordination improvements (e.g. clearer referral touchpoints, feedback loops, and follow-up expectations) that support schools and education bodies in navigating services for students. Actions will be advanced subject to partner agreement and formal approvals. 2. Clarify roles, responsibilities, and communication protocols where systems intersect. • With partners, ECE will seek to define and communicate who does what, when, and how information flows at key points (referral, triage, service delivery, and school follow-up), so that schools, families, and education bodies have consistent guidance across regions. 3. Support education bodies to apply agreed-upon processes. ECE will work with education bodies, where applicable, to embed any agreed protocols into school-based practices (e.g., SBST processes, class profiles, transition planning), ensuring materials are manageable and sustainable for small and multigrade school contexts. 4. Explore information-sharing improvements that respect privacy and partner authorities. • With partners, ECE will explore options – using existing tools wherever possible – to improve visibility of referral status and service coordination for schools and families, ensuring compliance with ATIPP, and partner policies, and avoiding duplicative systems.
Timeframe	**2026-27** • Continue interdepartmental planning discussions to identify near-term coordination improvements; seek partner alignment on roles and communication pathways; and engage education bodies to surface school level pressure points and usability needs.

	2027-28 • Where feasible and approved, implement agreed coordination improvements (e.g., updated referral/communication protocols) and assess usability with schools and education bodies; identify further opportunities for collaboration that remain within existing mandates and capacities. *Note: Any changes that affect partner programs, platforms, or resourcing will proceed only with partner agreement and through established GNWT approval and communication processes.*
Recommendation 6: Revise inclusive schooling plan types and templates. This includes removing or updating the MEP, developing clear guidelines for selecting appropriate plan types, and exploring territory-wide implementation of class support plans or class reviews.	***AGREE*** The Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, under her authority to issue direction to education bodies, will consider revisions related to inclusive schooling plan types and templates in the Ministerial Directive on Inclusive Schooling. ECE will support the Minister by providing analysis, engagement, and implementation guidance to improve clarity, consistency, and effectiveness in student support planning across the JK-12 system. Clear and consistent planning tools support effective inclusive schooling. The Inclusive Schooling Review identified confusion and inconsistency in the use of inclusive schooling plan types, including what information is required, when different plans should be used, and how plans related to curriculum and assessment expectations. Clarifying required elements, standards, and intended outcomes will support clearer decision-making and more consistent implementation. – Planning tools must reflect current curriculum and classroom realities. Educators emphasized the importance of planning approaches that are manageable, aligned with contemporary curriculum, and responsive to increasingly complex and diverse classroom contexts. Strengthening guidance and exploring class-level planning tools can support collaboration, reduce administrative burden, and improve coherence between individual and classroom supports. This work will respect the professional judgement of educators and the operational authority of education bodies. Revisions will focus on strengthening territorial guidance and tools, not centralizing decision-making or changing employer responsibilities.
Management Response **Planned Management Action**	The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) will support the Minister in the following actions: 1. Review and update inclusive schooling plan types and templates. • ECE will review existing inclusive schooling plan types and templates, including the Modified Education Program (MEP), and prepare options (e.g. update, consolidate, or remove) that align with current curriculum and inclusive schooling practice. (Any change to plan types in the Directive would be at the Minister's discretion.)

	2. Develop clear territorial guidance on plan selection and use. • ECE will develop clear guidance to support educators and school leaders in selecting and using appropriate plan types, clarifying how different plans relate to instructional approaches, assessment, and student pathways, while allowing flexibility to respond to individual student needs. • Explore class-level planning approaches to support inclusive practice: in collaboration with education bodies, ECE will explore the territory-wide use of class support plans or class reviews as tools to support whole-class planning, collaboration, and efficient use of resources, particularly in classrooms with multiple individual support plans. 3. Work with education bodies to support practical implementation. • ECE will engage education bodies to ensure revised plan types, templates, and guidance are practical, usable, and aligned with school-based processes, with attention to sustainability in small and multigrade school contexts.
Timeframe	**2026-27** • Review existing inclusive schooling plan types and templates and prepare options for the Minister. • Draft plan-selection guidance and explore optional class-level planning approaches with education bodies. • Coordinate with Recommendation #3 (roles/authorities) and Recommendation #4 (professional learning) to ensure usability. **2027-28** • Subject to the Minister's direction, finalize and share revised plan guidance and any associated templates / tools. • Support education bodies and schools to apply updated planning approaches in ways that are manageable and aligned with local context. • Align the Inclusive Schooling Guidelines and related materials as needed to reflect approved changes; ensure coherence with Recommendation #8 and #9 monitoring / data work.
Recommendation 7: Develop inclusive schooling protocols to clarify pathways for students transitioning within and outside the school. This includes strengthening early childhood screening and intervention to address learning challenges early on and promoting a shared understanding of how support	***AGREE*** The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) agrees that clear, system-wide protocols for transitions within and outside the school – from Junior Kindergarten through Grade 12 – are essential to realizing the vision of responsive, respectful, and supportive inclusive schooling in students' home communities. Transitions are a core implementation gap identified by the Review. Educators and families highlighted the need for clear processes for plan types and transitions into, within, and out of the school system, including the implications of supports for high school programming and graduation. Clarifying these pathways will strengthen continuity of learning and reduce variability across schools and education bodies.

plans affect curricular achievement and graduation outcomes.	Early identification and effective transition mechanics must work together across the JK–12 continuum including school-entry, senior secondary course pathways, graduation requirements, and post-secondary or community transitions. Strengthening junior kindergarten and kindergarten childhood screening and early intervention that is culturally responsive and appropriate to northern contexts must be accompanied by clear high school pathway mechanics to address known bottlenecks in course selection, plan impacts, and graduation tracking. To remove variability and accelerate early supports, ECE will develop options for the Minister's consideration, under the Minister's authority in the *Education Act,* Including the established ability to issue Ministerial Directives to education bodies, regarding territory-wide early childhood screening at entry to Junior Kindergarten / Kindergarten. Options will set out implementation pathways, standardized early childhood screening windows, and documentation / communication expectations. Regardless of the option selected, early childhood screening results would be recorded in the student record and used to inform inclusive schooling supports to minimize or avoid future learning gaps. ECE acknowledges feedback that timelines for early childhood screening and transition protocols must be accelerated to avoid impacts on cohorts moving through key developmental windows and senior secondary decision points.
Management Response **Planned Management Action**	The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) will: 1. Publish JK–12 Transition Protocols for Inclusive Schooling. • ECE will develop -territory wide transition protocols that clarify student pathways, roles, and information hand-offs at key transition points. The protocols will also be designed to align with options the Minister may consider, such as a potential Ministerial Directive establishing consistent JK/K childhood screening expectation. 2. Strengthen JK/K Childhood Screening and Early Intervention within the Inclusive Schooling continuum. • ECE will create options for the Minister's consideration – grounded in the *Education Act's* provision for Ministerial direction – regarding consistent early childhood screening at JK/K entry. These options will include standardized early childhood screening windows, culturally responsive guidance, and supports for early intervention. Regardless of the Minister's decision, ECE will continue to enhance early years screening- resources for educators 3. Build a Shared Understanding of Support Plans and Pathways. • ECE will produce clear, accessible guidance and examples that help educators, school leaders, and families understand how different support plans relate to achievement, course pathways, and graduation outcomes. This will include how early years screening- information (if adopted) can inform supports through the inclusive schooling continuum.

	4. Embed Transition Planning in School-Based Support Team (SBST) Processes. • ECE will embed clear expectations for proactive transition planning within SBST processes, ensuring continuity of learning and supports across grades and schools. This includes how early learning information—such as early childhood screening results—should be incorporated into planning where relevant. 5. Light-Touch Monitoring for Continuous Improvement. • ECE will implement feasible, nononerous checks that ensure transition expectations are being applied consistently and inform broader inclusive schooling improvements. Should the Minister choose to adopt a JK/K childhood screening- requirement, ECE will integrate corresponding monitoring aligned with the *Education Act* provisions enabling program evaluation and student progression- oversight.
Timeframe	**2025-26** • June 2026: Draft JK–12 Transition Protocols (for discussion with education bodies) and prepare options for the Minister's consideration regarding territory-wide JK/K early childhood screening (e.g. via Ministerial Directive, etc.), accompanied by a high-level guidance and implementation approach. **2026-27** • September 2026: Finalize materials and readiness supports so that, should the Minister choose to proceed, consistent JK/K childhood screening expectations can be launched in the 2026-27 school year and be reflected in protocols and guidance. • October 2026: Release finalized JK-12 Transition Protocols and any companion materials for early childhood screening. If a Ministerial Directive is adopted, the final protocols and guidance will align with it. • March 2027: Embed transition expectations into SBST processes and initiate light-touch monitoring to support continuous improvements in inclusive schooling.
Recommendation 8: Develop a comprehensive monitoring framework for inclusive schooling. This includes developing a performance measurement plan (PMP) and logic model, identifying meaningful indicators to assess quality and effectiveness. Revise the reporting requirements in Operating Plans and Annual Reports as needed	***AGREE*** The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) agrees with the recommendation to develop a comprehensive monitoring framework for inclusive schooling. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) recognizes that a comprehensive, coherent monitoring framework is required to strengthen accountability for inclusive schooling and to better understand how inclusive schooling supports and practices contribute to student experiences and outcomes across the JK-12 system. Effective inclusive schooling requires meaningful monitoring and evaluation. The Inclusive Schooling Review identified that existing monitoring and reporting mechanisms do not consistently provide information on the quality, effectiveness, or outcomes of inclusive schooling practices. Strengthening

to ensure they are aligned with the PMP and logic model.	monitoring aligns with ECE's responsibilities to ensure inclusive schooling is implemented as intended and supports continuous improvement across the education system. Alignment and clarity reduce reporting burden and improves system learning. Developing a clear logic model and performance measurement plan will support a shared understanding of inclusive schooling goals, activities, and outcomes, while enabling Operating Plans and Annual Reports to capture information that is purposeful, comparable, and useful for decision-making – without creating unnecessary administrative burden for schools and education bodies.
Management Response **Planned Management Action**	The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) will: 1. Develop an Inclusive Schooling Logic Model and Performance Measurement Plan (PMP). • ECE will develop a territory-wide logic model and PMP for inclusive schooling that articulate intended outcomes, key activities, and system-level indicators across the JK–12 system. The PMP will focus on meaningful, feasible indicators that assess the quality and effectiveness of inclusive schooling practices, informed by NWT context and existing data sources. 2. Identify and phase-in meaningful indicators. • ECE will identify a limited set of indicators that reflect student experience, implementation of inclusive schooling practices, and system capacity, balancing the need for accountability with the realities of small schools, staff capacity, and regional variability. 3. Align planning and reporting requirements. • ECE will review and revise inclusive schooling-related reporting requirements in education bodies' Operating Plans and Annual Reports to ensure alignment with the inclusive schooling logic model and PMP, improving consistency and usefulness of reported information over time. 4. Support implementation and continuous improvement. • ECE will work with education bodies to support the implementation of the monitoring framework and will use the resulting information to inform system-level analysis, policy refinement, and continuous improvement of inclusive schooling practices.
Timeframe	**2026–27** • Develop the inclusive schooling logic model and performance measurement plan. • Identify proposed indicators and conduct engagement with education bodies to ensure feasibility and relevance. **2027–28** • Revise inclusive schooling related reporting requirements in Operating Plans and Annual Reports to align with the PMP and logic model. • Begin phased implementation of the monitoring framework and use findings to inform system-level improvement.

Recommendation 9: Develop data collection methods and processes for monitoring and evaluation of inclusive schooling. This includes researching and identifying methods that enable schools and education bodies to meaningfully monitor inclusive schooling in a way that is realistic, achievable, and not burdensome. This also includes identifying methods to capture student and family input.	***AGREE*** The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) agrees that strengthening data collection methods and processes is necessary to support effective monitoring and evaluation of inclusive schooling across the JK–12 system, that this work must be undertaken collaboratively with education bodies, and that it must be sequenced carefully to ensure that expectations are clear, tools are streamlined, and unnecessary reporting is reduced before any new data requirements are introduced. Effective system monitoring must be grounded in school and education-body realities. The Inclusive Schooling Review identified that existing data collection and reporting processes do not consistently capture information on the quality or effectiveness of inclusive schooling practices. At the same time, educators and administrators experience reporting fatigue and frustration when data expectations are layered onto existing processes without clear purpose or alignment. Addressing this gap requires simplifying and rationalizing current reporting expectations first, then introducing targeted data collection that clearly supports decision making and system learning. Sustainable data collection depends on collaboration and proportionality. ECE recognizes that monitoring approaches must support system learning and improvement without creating additional administrative burden for educators or education bodies. Working collaboratively to identify feasible methods – including leveraging existing processes – will support consistent implementation and long-term sustainability.
Management Response **Planned Management Action**	The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) will: 1. Co-develop feasible data collection methods with education bodies. • ECE will work collaboratively with education bodies to research and identify data collection methods that support meaningful monitoring of inclusive schooling practices at the school and regional levels. This work will prioritize approaches that are realistic, achievable, and that make use of existing data sources and processes where possible. 2. Identify practical approaches to capturing student and family perspectives. • In collaboration with education bodies, ECE will identify appropriate and manageable methods to capture student and family input on inclusive schooling experiences, ensuring approaches are accessible, respectful, and feasible for schools and communities across the territory. 3. Align data collection with existing planning and reporting processes. • ECE will seek to align new or revised data collection methods with existing planning, reporting, and school-based processes to minimize duplication and additional workload, and to support consistency across the education system.

	4. Implement a phased and adaptive approach. • ECE will take a phased approach to implementing new data collection methods, allowing for testing, refinement, and adjustment based on feedback from education bodies, with the goal of supporting continuous improvement and long-term sustainability.
Timeframe	**2026–27** • Engage with education bodies to identify feasible data collection methods aligned with the inclusive schooling monitoring framework. • Identify options for capturing student and family input that are realistic and appropriate to the JK–12 context. **2027–28** • Phase in selected data collection methods and processes in alignment with Operating Plan and Annual Report cycles. • Refine approaches based on implementation experience and feedback to support ongoing system learning and improvement.
Recommendation 10: Conduct a financial needs assessment for inclusive schooling in collaboration with education bodies and the federal government.	***AGREE*** The Department of Education, Culture and Employment agrees that a financial needs assessment is necessary to better understand the resourcing required to support inclusive schooling across the JK–12 system and to ensure that funding approaches reflect the realities and complexities experienced by schools and education bodies. Inclusive schooling needs have evolved and increased in complexity. The Inclusive Schooling Review identified that the volume and complexity of student needs in NWT schools have increased over time, placing pressure on existing staffing models and funding approaches. A financial needs assessment will support a clearer understanding of the resources required to meet inclusive schooling expectations as outlined in the Ministerial Directive. Credible, sustainable decisions require shared evidence with NWT education bodies, who are best positioned to describe on-the-ground realities across diverse contexts, including small schools and multigrade settings. Findings will feed into establishing planning and accountability processes used by education bodies, ensuring system alignment. The assessment will remain within the NWT JK–12 system, will not imply a transfer of jurisdiction, and will not prejudge future intergovernmental arrangements. Where external programs (e.g., time-limited funds accessed by education bodies) affect pressures experienced in schools, ECE may gather contextual information to inform analysis; this will not constitute shared jurisdiction or joint decision-making over JK–12. ECE will stage the assessment to provide early cost insights to guide near-term implementation, followed by a comprehensive analysis to support sustainable, territory-wide funding arrangements.

Management Response **Planned Management Action**	The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) will: 1. Launch a phased financial needs assessment with education bodies. • ECE will collaborate with education bodies on a two-stage assessment: an Initial Scan to inform near-term decisions, and a more comprehensive assessment to support longer-term funding structural and funding improvements, leveraging existing data first and using light-touch validation only where needed. 2. Use Initial Scan findings to inform early decisions and implementation supports • Preliminary cost bands will guide early rollouts connected to other recommendations (such as transition protocols and early-years guidance) without predetermining the long-term model. 3. Complete a comprehensive assessment to support sustainable arrangements. • The comprehensive phase will refine costs with validated utilization data and diverse operating realities, acknowledging intersecting external programs without implying shared jurisdiction. Findings will inform territorial policy and funding arrangements for inclusive schooling, aligned to existing planning and accountability frameworks.
Timeframe	**2025-26** • Set the scope of the needs assessment with education bodies. • Confirm existing available information (staffing, finances, planning data), confirming specifics with education bodies as needed. • Produce an initial scan that provides a preliminary picture of inclusive schooling costs to guide decisions being made for 2026-27 school year. **2026-27** • Use the initial scan findings to make early adjustments that support other inclusive schooling initiatives rolling out across the system. • Continue the deeper assessment work, gather more fulsome information and confirm what was learned in the initial phase. **2027-28** • Finish the full needs assessment, bringing together everything learned in both phases. • Use the results to shape long-term decisions about how inclusive schooling should be funded and planned across the territory. • Fold the findings into education bodies' regular planning and reporting processes.

Recommendation 11: Review and revise the inclusive schooling funding formula to reflect student needs and complexities. This includes providing increased funding for inclusive schooling staff positions and flexible allocation of funds based on actual school needs.	***AGREE*** The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) agrees that reviewing and revising the inclusive schooling funding formula is necessary to ensure funding more accurately reflects student needs and the realities of delivering inclusive schooling across the JK-12 system. Current funding approaches do not fully reflect need or complexity. The Inclusive Schooling Review identified that the volume and complexity of student needs vary significantly across schools and regions, and that existing funding approaches – largely population-based – do not consistently align with inclusive schooling expectations or on-the-ground realities. A sustainable funding model must prioritize instructional capacity as the primary driver of inclusion, require collaboration and a clear understanding of system capacity. ECE recognizes that education bodies experience inclusive schooling pressures differently depending on school size, staffing stability, and community context. While additional Support Assistants (SAs) are needed, inclusive schooling outcomes depend most on the strength of classroom teaching, access to teacher specialists, and educators' confidence to use UDL-aligned strategies and flexible learning options for students with disabilities. ECE recognizes that education bodies experience inclusive schooling pressures differently depending on school size, staffing stability, and community context. Revising the funding formula in collaboration with education bodies will support a more responsive and sustainable approach, while avoiding unintended administrative or operational burden.
Management Response **Planned Management Action**	The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) will: 1. Use the phased financial needs assessment to guide the funding formula review. • ECE will use findings from both phases of the inclusive schooling needs assessment to inform revisions to the funding formula, ensuring decisions are based on real pressures, school contexts, and resource requirements. 2. Collaborate with education bodies to refine funding model options. • ECE will collaborate with education bodies to explore funding formula options that better reflect student needs and complexities, including considerations related to staffing, specialist access, and flexibility for small, remote, and multigrade schools. 3. Prioritize sustainability and manageability. • ECE will assess potential revisions for clarity, long-term sustainability, and administrative feasibility. The aim is a model that supports consistent territory-wide implementation without increasing reporting burden.

	4. Align revised funding with existing JK-12 planning and accountability processes. • Any updated funding approach will integrate with the existing territorial planning, budgeting, and reporting cycles to ensure coherence with broader JK-12 initiatives and implementation supports.
Timeframe	**2028–29** • Incorporate findings from the comprehensive needs assessment to develop a small set of feasible, evidence-based funding formula options with education bodies, and complete internal analysis in order to identify a preferred option. Conclude collaboration with education bodies and seek the necessary government approvals through GNWT planning and approval processes. **2029–30** • If approved, implement the revised funding formula for the 2030-31 school year and integrate it with existing planning and reporting cycles. *Note: Any adjustments to staffing expectations or funding mechanisms will be considered by the Minister and the GNWT through established planning and approval processes and are not pre-determined by this management response.*

Appendix A: Management Response – Actions Implementation Schedule

Recommendation	Action (Summary)	Start	End	Status	Responsibility	Approvals / Dependencies
Recommendation 1: Revise the inclusive schooling definition in the Ministerial Directive. This should include clarifying the meaning and application of the "common learning environment," including its scope beyond the classroom, and integrating key elements identified by participants such as mental health, life skills, and flexible learning environments.	Definition in Ministerial Directive	2026-27	2027-28	Not Yet Started	ECE	Ministerial decision on Directive changes; updates to guidance follow decision
Recommendation 2: Develop resources and supports to aid parents and guardians with navigating inclusive schooling supports and services. This could include the development of a plain-language guide to explain supports (for example, plan types, access to Support Assistants, and rehabilitation services) and establishing a systems-navigator to assist families and schools.	Family-Facing Navigation and Resources	2026-27	2027-28	Not Yet Started	ECE (with education bodies)	Materials must align with the Directive; navigation approach subject to capacity and fit with school/body roles.
Recommendation 3: Develop a territory-wide inclusive schooling staffing approach that better reflects the realities of inclusive schooling and ensures alignment between staffing levels and inclusive schooling expectations. This should include establishing a minimum staffing ratio for inclusive schooling staff; clarifying inclusive schooling roles, responsibilities, and authorities; and contingency planning for staff turnover.	Territory-wide Staffing Approach	2026-27	2027-28	Not Yet Started	ECE (with education bodies)	Any future staffing expectations or funding impacts proceed through established GNWT approvals; not pre-determined by this response.

Recommendation 4: Improve support and coordination for professional learning and capacity building in collaboration with Education Bodies. This includes establishing opportunities for inter-regional collaboration to support educators through sharing inclusive schooling practices, challenges, and solutions that are grounded in NWT realities.	Professional Learning & Inter-regional Collaboration	2026-27	Ongoing	Not Yet Started	ECE (with education bodies)	Respect decentralized delivery; ensure alignment with teacher standards and local implementation.
Recommendation 5: Work with the Department of Health and Social Services and the NWT health authorities to improve access to specialist services (e.g., assessment and rehabilitation services) by focusing on integrated service delivery models and reducing wait times for assessments and therapies. This includes working across the education and health systems to define roles, responsibilities and communication protocols for service referrals and follow-up, and explore platforms for tracking student referrals, assessments and service delivery.	ECE-HSS Interface (School-Aged Children Rehabilitative & Related Services)	2025-26	Ongoing	In Progress	ECE (with HSS)	Joint work advances only within mandates/approvals; any platform or resourcing changes require partner agreement and GNWT approvals.
Recommendation 6: Revise inclusive schooling plan types and templates. This includes removing or updating the MEP, developing clear guidelines for selecting appropriate plan types, and exploring territory-wide implementation of class support plans or class reviews.	Plan Types, Templates & Guidance Documents	2026-27	2027-28	Not Yet Started	ECE (with education bodies)	Ministerial decision if Directive changes are required; updates to Inclusive Schooling Guidelines/tools after decision.
Recommendation 7: Develop inclusive schooling protocols to clarify pathways for students transitioning within and outside the school. This includes strengthening early childhood screening and	Transition Protocols & Early Childhood Screening (Options)	2025-26	2026-27	Not Yet Started	ECE	If Minister proceeds, early childhood screening expectations formalized via Directive; lighttouch

intervention to address learning challenges early on and promoting a shared understanding of how support plans affect curricular achievement and graduation outcomes.						monitoring aligned with Education Act authorities.
Recommendation 8: Develop a comprehensive monitoring framework for inclusive schooling. This includes developing a performance measurement plan (PMP) and logic model, identifying meaningful indicators to assess quality and effectiveness. Revise the reporting requirements in Operating Plans and Annual Reports as needed to ensure they are aligned with the PMP and logic model.	Monitoring Framework (Logic Model and Performance Measurement Plan)	2026-27	2027-28	Not Yet Started	ECE	Phased indicator adoption; revisions to reporting templates scheduled with annual planning cycles.
Recommendation 9: Develop data collection methods and processes for monitoring and evaluation of inclusive schooling. This includes researching and identifying methods that enable schools and education bodies to meaningfully monitor inclusive schooling in a way that is realistic, achievable, and not burdensome. This also includes identifying methods to capture student and family input.	Data Collection Methods (including student/family input)	2026-27	2027-28	Not Yet Started	ECE (with education bodies)	Sequence after recommendation 8 scoping so expectations are streamlined before adding new asks.
Recommendation 10: Conduct a financial needs assessment for inclusive schooling in collaboration with education bodies and the federal government.	Financial Needs Assessment (Phased)	2025-26	2027-28	Not Yet Started	ECE (with education bodies)	Remains within JK–12 mandate; contextual info on external programs does not imply shared jurisdiction.
Recommendation 11: Review and revise the inclusive schooling funding formula to reflect student needs and complexities. This includes providing increased funding for inclusive schooling staff positions and	Funding Formula Review & Revision	2026-27	2029-30	Not Yet Started	ECE	Subject to Minister's direction and GNWT approvals.

flexible allocation of funds based on actual school needs.						