

CHAPTER 2

Bilingual Education and Language of Instruction

Establishing an improved framework for program delivery and resource development

The Government of Nunavut and the Department of Education are committed to bilingual education and to graduating students fluent in the Inuit language. It is the cornerstone of our education system and is a vital part of developing well-educated and self-sufficient high school graduates. Bilingual education will continue to be delivered in Nunavut; however, the delivery framework and the responsibility for how it is delivered will be modified by the proposed legislative amendments.

In 2008 there was great hope put into the establishment of the three models of bilingual education. However, despite the best intentions at the time, it has become clear that this system has led to significant problems and has actually prevented students from achieving the desired language outcomes. This has been recognized by the Special Committee, the OAG, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, and the Department of Education, among others.

The current system of three different models creates significant inconsistencies between schools which prevents the delivery of a high-quality and consistent Education Program, and the proper assessment of student progress across the territory. In addition, a significant shortage of Inuktitut-speaking qualified teaching professionals has intensified these challenges, because (1) there are currently not enough Inuktitut-speaking teachers; and (2) it is not possible to properly allocate those Inuktitut-speaking teachers to communities, due to the varying models and the lack of standardization of instructional minutes and assigned language of instruction per grade and subject.

The following changes are proposed to Part 4 of the *Education Act*:

- No longer having three different models of bilingual education and instead having a single, standardized, but flexible, framework that is informed by bilingual education models in other jurisdictions. By reducing the significant variation across communities that having three different models creates, this framework will better manage the shortage of Inuktitut-speaking teachers, and allow a more flexible delivery of bilingual education that ensures better student outcomes across the territory, and allows for proper progress assessment.

- This standardized framework would be the responsibility of the Minister, who would have the authority to direct the amount of instruction time required in each language for each grade and the authority to provide direction on which language of instruction would be used for each subject. By standardizing this, it will be possible to have staff certification regulations that would guide Inuit educators into specific areas of need, because it will be possible to know exactly how many teachers are required, in which communities, and for which grades/subjects. Ministerial directions will be based on both local demographics and the capacity of the department to deliver bilingual education, something that the current system fails to take into account.
- Provisions in the *Inuit Language Protection Act* with respect to the right of a parent to have their child receive Inuit language instruction will be amended to reflect that the right is to have the majority of instruction be in the Inuit language. This means that 50% or more of instruction must be in Inuktitut. At earlier grades and in some communities where there are particular circumstances, the percentage of courses, subjects, and grade levels will be higher. As more Inuktitut-speaking teachers are trained and enter the system, the higher the percentage of instruction time delivered in Inuktitut will be. It should be noted, that there will be continued flexibility to offer French as an additional language.

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These changes will provide the following benefits:

- Consistency in delivery and outcomes from community to community and region to region, while at the same time recognizing that there are currently significant differences in language needs and strengths between communities and regions.
- Accurate and effective evaluation of student progress.
- Streamlining of the development, adoption and adaptation of curriculum.
- Evidence-based decision-making with respect to instructional minutes.
- Improved flexibility and recruitment as the system evolves to address and resolve the shortage of Inuktitut-speaking teachers.
- Greater guidance for the development of new Inuktitut-speaking teachers and ongoing training, support and retention for current Inuktitut-speaking teachers.
- The continued development of Inuktitut teaching resources and tools is essential, and will become easier and more effective in the proposed bilingual framework.
- The proposed changes would create a system similar to the highly successful framework used by the Kativik School Board in Nunavik.

Local Control for Bilingual Education

DEAs will still have an important role in advocating to the Minister with respect to bilingual education, although final decisions will rest with the Minister. DEAs will retain and be refocused in their essential role in developing local programming. This programming enhances the standardized Education Program and can promote local culture and related local language needs, goals and dialectical interests. Giving the DEAs the role of protecting local or regional language interests will allow the department to focus on overall language progression and skills development, which will strengthen Inuktitut learning outcomes for all Nunavummiut.