

CHAPTER 3

Inclusive Education

Ensuring that all students are provided opportunities to participate, engage, grow and learn

Inclusive Education is a term that refers to ensuring access for all children to both the Education Program offered in the regular instructional settings with their peers, and the supports required to meet their individual learning needs. Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit perspectives—traditional Inuit laws, principles, values and worldview—form the basis for the Nunavut inclusion philosophy. Developing and implementing an Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit approach to inclusion, in combination with current knowledge and best practices regarding inclusion, is the foundation of fostering life-long learning and developing self-reliant graduates.

Students come to school with many different skills, abilities, interests and needs. Inclusive Education promotes the ability for teachers to make the appropriate accommodations to programs in order to meet the individual needs of students in their classrooms. In some cases, these accommodations are part of the regular Education Program. In some cases, a student may require accommodations that omit, change, or add learning objectives, which are beyond what is expected, but do not change the overall intent of the curriculum. In other cases, the student will require delivery of the Education Program in an alternate format which may require external support devices or services or may require an Individual Student Support Plan (ISSP).

Proposed Changes to Part 6 of the *Education Act*

In the updated *Education Act* the responsibility of implementation of Inclusive Education provisions would be held by principals, and not local DEAs as it is in the current legislation. The principal will directly monitor teaching staff with respect to their roles and responsibilities. These responsibilities include the identification of the needs of students per the directions of the Minister. Classroom teachers, with the support of student support teachers, will develop the ISSP and the school team will oversee the development and approval. Education staff will now be fully responsible for ISSPs.

The Minister will have the authority to give directions for what is meant by “specialized services and assessments.” Defining and providing direction for these types of accommodations is an important step towards improving clarity

in the system. In order to bring better balance across the territory and help ensure that services are consistently and fairly offered, the Minister will also have the authority to provide clarification of what is reasonable and practical with respect to an ISSP. Decisions with respect to accommodating or individualizing supports and settings for students, as well as decisions with respect to specialized services or assessments for students, will rest with the Minister to ensure high-level accountability for these decisions.

Appeals of the decisions made by education staff in relation to ISSPs will continue to be possible. This appeals process will be administered by the department, but appeal decisions will be made by a neutral third party. DEAs will no longer bear the responsibility of organizing the administrative aspects of an appeal.

The goals of these proposed changes

- Ensuring that parents and students understand the principles and methods of programming for student success, how it works and who is responsible for development and implementation—especially for ISSPs. This includes the goal of increasing and improving the quality of family engagement, and intentionally inviting and welcoming parents as the primary advocates for their children in this process. The engagement of parents in the education of their children is a shared responsibility, and should be respectful and facilitative of family choice and voice.
- Making the lines of accountability as well as responsibilities for Inclusive Education clearer for everyone involved and more practical.
- Putting the responsibility for development, approval and implementation clearly and conclusively in the hands of frontline education professionals. Establishing clear responsibilities and duties for teachers with respect to ISSPs.
- Improving school attendance, student achievement, risk management and to establish earlier and more efficient planning.
- Ensuring that the tools, resources and services that are available are clearly set out, fairly distributed, and that access to them is barrier-free.
- Improving the monitoring, collection and reporting of data, which will allow a better understanding of and response to student needs.
- Establishing an appeals process for which the department is able to provide the essential supports.
- Alleviating the responsibilities of already busy DEA members, and allowing DEAs to focus on other important actions and decisions. DEAs would remain involved as advocates for their community with respect to the overall goals of Inclusive Education, as well as promoters of and conduits for parental engagement and representation. This preserves an important aspect of local control.

There are a number of ways that we can ensure that Inclusive Education is robust and functioning well in our schools. Making changes to the legislation to better assign roles and responsibilities is an important first step. Implementation of these changes in the legislation will be made in concert with updated policies, programming and staffing initiatives.