

### *Social Context*

Yukon has a total land area of 483,450 square kilometres and a population of 31,305. The population of Whitehorse, the capital city, is 22,984, and the remaining population is divided among the 19 rural communities.

### *Organization of the School System*

There are 28 schools with a total enrollment from kindergarten to grade 12 of 5,921. Half of the schools are designated as rural schools. These schools typically have low student populations, several multi-level classes, and low pupil-to-teacher ratios. Many rural schools do not offer grades 11 and 12 and may have fewer optional programs offered in the secondary grades.

Unlike most jurisdictions in Canada, there are no school taxes in Yukon and only one school board, that being for École Émilie-Tremblay, the territory's only French school. School superintendents work for the Department of Education, which is responsible for most aspects of school operations. Almost every school has a school council, a body which has some but not all the powers of a school board, including the responsibility for schools rules, school plans, and dispute resolution, to name a few.

Yukon follows the British Columbia curriculum in all subject areas. This curriculum is sometimes modified — with departmental approval — to reflect local needs and conditions. As well, up to 20% of a student's educational program may be locally developed. Schools are organized into two segments: elementary (K to 7), and secondary (8 to 12). There are three Catholic schools within the Yukon public school system. Instructional time allotments for each subject vary in the elementary grades but are standardized to 120 hours per course for grades 8 to 12.

Approximately 25% of Yukon students are of First Nation Ancestry. These students often participate in Native language programs and/or in various locally developed courses aimed at developing awareness, appreciation, and knowledge of First Nations culture and traditions. The remainder of the student population is predominantly of European or British ancestry. Approximately 7% of Yukon students are enrolled in a French Immersion program, while nearly 1.8% attend French school.

### *Science Teaching*

Major changes in the science curriculum in the past 10 years include the following:

- increased number of girls taking senior science courses
- increased emphasis on demonstration of science activities such as “science fairs”
- increased number of science options available at both the junior high and senior high levels
- integrated experiential science programming

As noted above, Yukon follows, with appropriate adaptations and modifications, the BC curriculum. Most modifications involve the selection and use of materials that are relevant to Yukon's biology, chemistry, and geology.

### *Science Testing*

Classroom teachers are encouraged to use a variety of testing measures — performance, projects, teacher-made tests, and student self-evaluation. Typically both practical and/or content end of chapter or unit tests are developed and administered by teachers. Marks are criterion-referenced (i.e., compared to an absolute standard) and are based on goals and objectives outlined in the curriculum guide.

*Written Assessment*

Yukon 13-year-old students performed as well in this category as students in the Canadian sample at levels 2, 3, 4, and 5. There is a significant difference between the performance of Yukon 13-year-olds and Canadian students overall at level 1 in the written assessment. Yukon 16-year-old students performed as well in this category as students in the Canadian sample at levels 1, 2, 3, and 5. There is a significant difference between the performance of Yukon 16-year-olds and Canadian students overall at level 4 in the written assessment.

Yukon students of both age groups showed significant improvement in performance between 1996 and 1999 at levels 3 and 5. In addition, 16-year-olds showed significant improvement at level 4.

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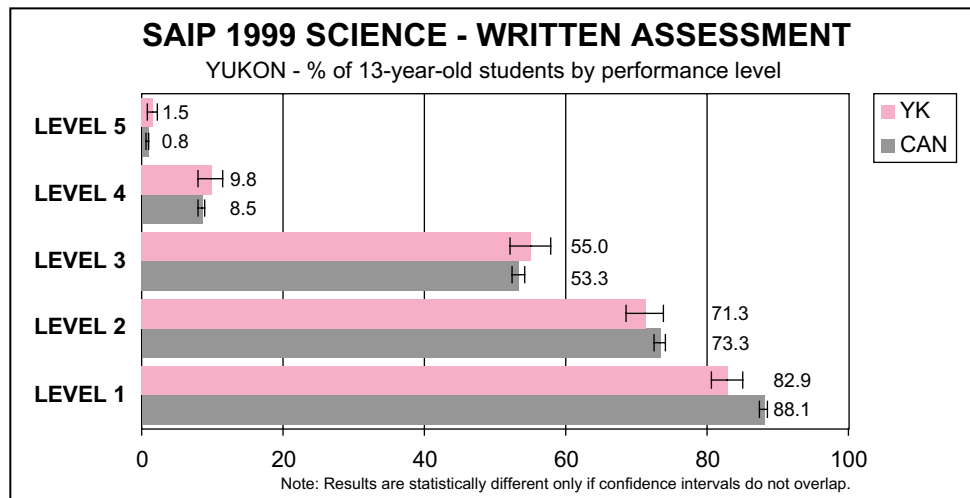


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