

Junior kindergarten off to a smooth start in Yellowknife, says school board ^[1]

Approximately 130 YK1 junior kindergarten students enjoy low staff-to-student ratio

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It's been smooth sailing so far for junior kindergarten in Yellowknife Education District No.1 (YK1), according to school board superintendent Metro Huculak.

There are about 130 junior kindergarten students enrolled with the school board. Over one-third — 48 — are enrolled in French immersion at J.H. Sissons School.

This gives a student-educator ratio of no more than 10 students to one staff member, which is lower than the government funded ratio of 12-to-1.

"This way the staff in the room are able to network more with the kids," Huculak said.

"The kids get a more effective program, because staff can spend more time with each individual child."

The schools have made accommodations for the junior kindergarteners in phys-ed and music classes as well as having made changes to bathrooms to allow for the small stature of the children. Huculak said they've also ordered new playground equipment for the youth.

All of the teachers at the schools have a background in early childhood education. For Jordan Shortt, a teacher at J.H. Sissons, this has helped her understand the most effective tactics for teaching children this age.

"We do a lot of modelling. You'll see us often say something in French and model it with our hands," she said.

"Or a lot of the time when I'm speaking with my [teaching] assistant we use language that the children are starting to use themselves."

One issue to be resolved is the lack of bussing for junior kindergarten students. Instead, teachers go to school early so parents can drop children off if they need to. Huculak said he hopes there will be bussing by September 2018.

Brigitte Rivet, the principal of J.H. Sissons, said there were some growing pains at the start of the school year, but now the students are settled.

"The first two weeks are an adaptation for everybody — for staff and students," she said.

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