



Draft Curriculum Feedback

Highlights for the Board

April 27, 2021

Submitted by
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Purpose and Procedure

March 29, 2021, our government shared with us the draft Kindergarten to Grade 6 Curriculum. Our Division chose to solicit feedback from teachers in the field, the ones who know our students and how they learn best.

Through a series of virtual feedback sessions, teachers were given an opportunity to voice what they liked about the curriculum as well as their concerns and solutions moving forward. As expected, the level of professionalism throughout the feedback sessions has been exceptional and our teachers clearly have their students best interests at heart.

This feedback platform was organized in such a way that teachers were able to give specific examples of the learners in their classrooms and connect those examples to the concerns they shared with the objectives outlined in the draft curriculum. This added to the richness of the feedback sessions.

Positives

Overall Organization and Format

- ☐ Guiding questions provide direction and learning outcomes are clearly stated.
- ☐ Well organized and easy to follow (in terms of layout).
- ☐ Some of the objectives are very detailed therefore teachers understand the outcomes that need to be taught to students.

Financial Literacy

- ☐ Support for the introduction of financial literacy, if taught in an age appropriate way for example, finding a recipe, making a grocery list, and staying within an allotted budget in Grade 2 would not be considered age appropriate.

English Language Arts

- ☐ Literacy alignment in the English Language Arts curriculum demonstrates a clear progression of learning that allows for all students to experience success.
- ☐ Focus on phonological awareness and direct phonics in Kindergarten to Grade 4.

Other Subject Areas

- ❑ Previously, science was not a separate subject area for Kindergarten programming. The draft curriculum now makes science its own subject with specific outcomes.

Concerns

Content is Not Developmentally and Age Appropriate

- ❑ Overall, there is an agreement that this curriculum is not developmentally/age appropriate.
 - ❑ Knowledge, understanding, skills and procedures already exist in upper grades, and yet, the new draft curriculum introduces these to students at younger grades, as well as introducing new skills, and requiring students to recall facts.

Curricular Objectives

- ❑ The draft curriculum lacks the front matter typically seen in each subject area, to help establish a guiding framework for the implementation of objective
- ❑ There is no scope and sequence, which means that objectives seem to appear at random and they are not reinforced throughout the grades. Currently, our curriculum introduces a concept and circles back to the same concept in later units or grades, creating a spiral approach to teaching and learning.
- ❑ There is a disconnect between the skills and the objectives (for example, Math in Kindergarten asks students to count to 10, but also introduces money and expects students to know dollars and cents, which is actually decimals and fractions).
- ❑ Abstract concepts (like time) are difficult for young students to understand which makes them developmentally inappropriate.
- ❑ Teachers expressed in every session that the vast majority of the outcomes are written in such a vague way that they are not sure of what exactly needs to be taught.
- ❑ The vocabulary is unattainable by students and hard to understand by teachers. For example in Grade 2 Social Studies, "Identify the profound influence of hereditary rulers and the clan system", and asks questions such as: "Was the Magna Carta the beginning of English democracy through Parliament?"

- ❑ The sheer volume of learning objectives to be covered within a school year is concerning.

Depth of Learning

- ❑ Encourages rote memorization of facts, particularly related to history. An example is in Grade 1: *Time and Change* in Social Studies. Students are asked to create a timeline depicting BCE and CE, and yet they struggle to know and understand the concepts of yesterday and tomorrow.
- ❑ Many of the verbs in the English Language Arts curriculum state that students will “identify”. This is a very low level knowledge acquisition and only requires students to access surface level understanding. There needs to be a balance between simple memorization or recalling of facts and deep, critical thinking.
- ❑ There is an assumption that students already have prior knowledge about content for many objectives. This is concerning especially in regard to those with complex learning needs and because there is no link to teaching of such knowledge in prior grades.

Lack of Resources/Professional Development

- ❑ Due to the quick implementation period of this curriculum, there is a lack of professional development and resources (textbooks, technology, manipulatives, etc.) to support teachers in ensuring that they are well prepared to teach this new curriculum.

Social Studies

- ❑ Largest area of concern is within the Social Studies curriculum.
 - ❑ This curriculum is developmentally inappropriate and requires rote memorization of heavy historical facts.
 - ❑ Appears to have a heavy emphasis on American history instead of placing a focus on Canadian history.
 - ❑ Examples:
 - ❑ Grade 2:
 - ❑ “Arrange events in chronological sequence. Create a timeline for the rise and fall of the Roman Empire.”
 - ❑ “Investigate how the three monotheistic religions that arose out of the Middle East are related, and why Jews, Christians, and Muslims are sometimes called ‘people of the book?’ ”
 - ❑ “Compare the Black Death with later pandemics, including the Spanish Flu and COVID-19.”

- ❑ Grade 3:
 - ❑ “British monarchy and parliamentary democracy: origin of English charter of democratic rights, terms of *Magna Carta* (1215), immediate impact in England (King is responsible to council of barons), and contribution to democracy, law, and human rights in Canada.”
 - ❑ “Ask a question: What happens when a colony/province/family lives beyond its means (borrows money and spends more than it earns in income)?”

Indigenous Content/Diversity

- ❑ The scattered placement of Indigenous content throughout the draft curriculum is concerning as it does not create learning progressions to help build deeper knowledge for our students. The content needs to be strategically placed to follow learning progressions and build the scaffolding for student understanding.
- ❑ Random knowledge throughout the draft will lead to the feeling that this information is not interconnected. Through making connections in all subject areas and grades we will be able to truly explore reconciliation and start the healing.

French Immersion Specific Concerns

- ❑ In terms of academic language, when translated to the French language, it creates more concerns for the ability of our students to comprehend the objectives.
- ❑ For example: In Kindergarten the student will need to talk about the hemispheres and the axis of the earth. When learning a second language we must use everyday language for them to build their understanding. The new curriculum introduces many words that our language learners will not even know in their mother tongue, yet.

Assessment

- ❑ Concerns with how to assess the outcomes with lack of resources to support the assessment (e.g., Illustrative examples – These are aligned with our current curriculum and provide teachers with examples of rich performance tasks and success criteria that teachers can use when planning and implementing curriculum).

Digital Citizenship/Literacy

- ❑ Digital citizenship and literacy are very limited. This concept mostly appears in grade 5 and 6 only. The outcomes fail to address the importance of teaching students how to analyze, interpret and create an opinion on information found in digital resources for bias or false information.
- ❑ Coding in younger grades up to grade 3 is written as a process that can be learned and performed properly with pen and paper. We are concerned that this will not teach high level thinking or problem solving skills. Coding needs tools such as technology (computers). These are required as they will give the coder feedback on success and real life applications.
- ❑ Technology is near non-existent in Math with only one reference in all Kindergarten to Grade 6 using the word “technology”. Technology should be integrated with many opportunities in topic areas such as graphing, patterns, geometry, order of operations, etc.

Timing

- ❑ Teachers are still working in a global pandemic, they are concerned about having all of this new learning and implementation on top of navigating what comes next in terms of Covid-19.
- ❑ The expectation to have all subjects in Kindergarten through to Grade 6 be implemented in the same year is concerning.

Moving Forward

- ❑ That the government will hear the voices of the teachers and parents from around the province and bring all aspects of this curriculum back to the drawing board, this time with invested stakeholders (Boards, administrators, teachers, parents, students, field experts, researchers, etc.) to examine the feedback and re-draft aspects of this curriculum.
- ❑ That consideration is given to the language used in all areas of this curriculum. It should be clear and concise for teachers and parents to understand.
- ❑ That when resources are rolled out, the French Immersion resources will be aligned and on the same timeline as English resources. This has not always been the case, leaving French Immersion teachers to create resources as they move through the outcomes.

Additional Thoughts

- ❑ Kindergarten is a half time program. Students do not attend all day, everyday and so there are questions about the time allotment to teach the added objectives to students.
- ❑ Will there be resources provided to support the pilot of this new curriculum? Textbooks, professional learning time, collaboration, technology, manipulatives, etc.
- ❑ There is worry that there will be inconsistency in piloting. That if given the option, you may have one class in a school choose to do it, and the classroom next door chooses not to, which would ultimately create even more issues for the next year as students would have been exposed to different curriculum and objectives.
- ❑ Concerns about the holistic approach, what about the soft skills (interpersonal) that we need our students to have and that employers want them to have. What do we want our students to look like coming out of this curriculum?

Would you pilot this curriculum?

- ❑ A few would pilot portions of the English Language Arts and Math curriculum
- ❑ 95%+ of teachers attending the feedback sessions have stayed silent or said “no” to this question

Parent Feedback

Feedback was provided by parents through emails and letters to trustees and senior administration. Parents were also encouraged to use the Alberta Education link [here](#) to provide their response to the draft curriculum.

Themes derived from parent feedback were concerns about the timing of implementation with the pandemic continuing to be present in our lives, too much memorization within the curriculum, age appropriateness, information overload, and too many similarities to American curriculum. In addition, parents expressed concern that the draft curriculum does not provide a “love of learning” for students and parents fear that many students will regress in their learning. Parents have asked



trustees and senior administration to consider not engaging in the pilot offered by Alberta Education.