

Curriculum Engagement Summary

Feedback from Parents and Community Members

The following summary is comprised of feedback gathered at two parent engagement sessions hosted via Teams on October 19 and October 27th, as well as the feedback survey hosted on the Division Community Engagement website. The areas for feedback on the website were based on the areas of feedback that Minister LaGrange requested from Alberta School Board Association (ASBA). Lethbridge School Division trustees will provide feedback to ASBA. The ASBA will summarize feedback from the different school boards in a briefing for the Minister. Thank-you to parents and community members who provided feedback! It is very thoughtful and thorough. Your feedback will help the Board provide feedback that is informed by their stakeholders.

1. Developmental appropriateness.

Specific feedback regarding the age and developmental level appropriateness of draft K-6 curriculum?

1.1. General Statements

- The population that this new curriculum is geared towards are children, they need to be able to create, discover and explore new topics. We cannot be presenting one side of the story; they need to know the story from as many perspectives as possible.
- There's not enough space for 'play' in this curriculum. This is elementary and young children learn best through experiences and, yes, play. That doesn't just mean recess. It means learning music by playing with the instruments (not memorizing info about a 'classic piece'). It means learning science by doing experiments (not really viable within the way they've structured the science curriculum because the topics are spread too thin; see my later comments on this topic). It means learning math through physical manipulation of objects in addition to the writing part of math.
- Developmental appropriateness is the major flaw in the curriculum. It is not age appropriate whatsoever and does not follow any research on developmental learning stages of young children. The curriculum appears that it is written for University students, not young elementary students. The Social Studies curriculum in particular, has content that is incredibly irrelevant to our students. Learning about the history of religions and government is just silly and meaningless for grade one and two students.
- I am strongly opposed to the lack of research around developmental appropriateness and interest.
- I hope you [the Board] will take the stance that there is more than flawed content at issue here. This draft is inherently flawed, was created through an inherently flawed process, and is therefore beyond fixing. It's like messing up a recipe, you can try all you want adding or removing a little of this or that, but sometimes you just need to throw it out and start over. I truly believe nothing short of a complete re-start of both content and process is needed, based on several counts: the true authors are unknown; it has clearly been influenced by a partisan political agenda; it was guided by a very small group of appointed non-educators; it was reviewed briefly by a scant 100 educators who are forbidden to speak of the process; and it has been widely denounced province-wide

by the vast majority of teachers, principals, superintendents, school boards, and university education faculty.

- The lack of age-appropriate content and the large amount of outcomes to cover. No real learning or engagement occurs this way. It oppresses thinking and robs students of rich opportunities to delve deeply into subject matter.

1.2. Specific to ELA and Literature

- The LA curriculum is mostly reading and oration. There is little writing or creativity. The specific persuasive public speaking requirements are more suited to high school.
- Students should not be reading texts written in an outdated format, they need new and current authors to explore.

1.3. Specific to Mathematics

- The progression of the proposed Mathematics Program of Studies does not account for students with learning gaps and intellectual deficits, some environmental, psychological, learning issues and Covid related problems.
- For young children to develop numeracy, they need to 'play with numbers' – especially visually. I am completely in support of teaching children the standard algorithms for math - but you also need to show them why they work. And, in most case, that means visualizing.

1.4. Specific to Social Studies

- Not age appropriate. Teaching things in chronological order results in timelines that don't make sense to kids prevents scaffolding of learning (learning “from the inside out”)
- Timelines don't make sense to a child. Need better scaffolding. Little kids don't understand the difference between 100 and 500 years ago.
- They've put 'the plague' in the grade 2 curriculum. Huh? And Indigenous history of residential schools doesn't show up until grade 5 because students aren't mature enough yet to understand it before then.
- The social studies draft discusses areas of study that appear later in the current curriculum. Memorizing facts about significant world history in grade 1 or 2 does not matter when the students learning it have not even learned about what a community is and what their place is in it.
- Grade 2 kids do not need to learn about government in ancient Rome. Teach them about Alberta, Canadians, their neighborhood first.
- The Social Studies curriculum is the polar opposite of age appropriate. It appears that they just picked a starting date and decided to teach history starting at that point in kindergarten and working forward. While chronological order may make sense to an adult who already knows the material and can put each period in context, it's insanity to teach a child that way. Young children have no concept of the difference between 500 years ago and 1000 years ago. Learning happens when new knowledge can be related to existing knowledge, and this approach doesn't do that. To give kids a starting point to which they can connect history, etc. you need to start with the familiar and spiral out. I would point out that, in a multicultural society, that still allows for discussion of diverse cultures by talking about the cultures of the other kids within a class (for example) or local ethnic associations.

- I think the Social Studies curriculum is the worst example for this. My son is in grade 1 and the draft curriculum for social studies reads like a university course outline. I don't believe he needs to be learning about constitutional monarchies or 'the divine right of kings' before he has even so much as learned what the names of the provinces in Canada are. I also do not think learning about 'BCE' and 'CE' is going to be helpful for a kid who has no concept of how much a millennium or the number 1000 even is. It is just ridiculously out of touch. The idea of shoehorning the social studies curriculum into chronological order is detrimental to learning developmentally appropriate material and promoting a deeper understanding as children grow up. I don't want my grade 6 child to end up having a kindergarten level understanding of ancient societies or a grade 1 understanding of first nations culture.
- The social curriculum is overwhelming in its facts and knowledge. There is no opportunity for reflection and connection to students lives.

1.5. Specific to Music

- The fine arts curriculum is mostly art/music/drama history. There are almost no requirements for students to create anything of their own.
- Music – it's "intro to music 1000" at university level – more history than enjoyment and understanding of music (beat, rhythm, etc.)
- Gr. 6 music: Accidentals are not in the key signature. Students should sing and play in 6/8 time long before gr. 6, it is the basic metre of most nursery rhymes. Notation, yes in Gr. 6 but the document doesn't specify that. Pentatonic scale with raised 4th is blues scale - NO, only one version will create a blues scale that way and regardless, gr. 6 is too soon for that depth of knowledge of the blues music theory. Ionian terminology in gr. 6 is not age appropriate - absolutely in later years though. Experience music structured on the 12 bar blues scale- there is NO SUCH THING as a 12 bar blues scale! North Indian solfege is not appropriate in Gr. 6 - much of Classical Indian music uses a 21-pitch scale rather than the western 12-pitch scale and it is an extremely difficult and rigorous classical form of music - learning the solfege system for the western 12-pitch system we are surrounded with in North America is difficult enough in grades K-6. North Indian solfege is more suited to post secondary music study, HS at the earliest. A dotted note does NOT increase a note by one beat - there is only ONE of many situations in which that statement is correct. Differentiate between the sounds of the I, IV, and V chords- all major chords sound the same so how to differentiate? Impossible for gr. 6 students to achieve (also grammatical correction - one differentiates among 3 or more things, not between)12-bar blues progression is a pattern of I, IV, V chords of any scale. NOT true, again understanding of such theory is too soon for gr. 6. Changes in dynamics, tempo, and articulations can affect the structure of a musical piece NOT true. Structure=form and is not affected by any of the above, those are style considerations. A slur in music is a curved line that joins 2 pitches together to indicate they are to be played legato or without separation -not true for ties, this is basic knowledge that young students often find confusing so this error only increases confusion. Natural signs, which return the pitch that was changed back to a natural state- that is 1/3 of the understanding needed to negotiate accidentals well - again, BASIC knowledge missing that will confuse young students. Guiding Question - How did social change influence how music was

appreciated during the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, and throughout the history of the United States of America? How is this relevant or appropriate for gr. 6 in Alberta? Music during the Enlightenment was composed to support the ideas of freedom, democracy, and reason in mind. One of my children who is pursuing a doctoral degree in the music of this period says NO, absolutely wrong to claim this, and even if it were completely inappropriate for gr. 6. Ancient Greeks developed modes that serve as a structure for melodies today - not true, we have no idea what structure their scales were, the names of the modes survived but that's it. The classical period is considered the height of operatic composition; works can include Barber of Seville, Fidelio - 2 out of these 3 examples are NOT from the classical period. Music and singing were fundamentally important parts of the French Revolution as people could sing songs about freedom and brotherhood. Catchy tunes during the Fr. Rev. helped listeners remember lyrics and motivated political and military causes -absolutely not true, and completely inappropriate for the grade level. The Appreciation Guiding Question does not line up with the knowledge sections contained therein and is heavily biased toward colonizing and US material. This one grade in one subject is beyond redemption and needs to be scrapped and replaced by the work of real educators.

2. Diverse perspectives and cultures

2.1. General Comments

- Not respectful of non-Caucasians in many parts of the Social Studies curriculum.
- Diversity – need to use respectful terminology for all groups. Not “white settlers” vs “blacks”. Not “let’s sympathize with the KKK”
- The language used in the curriculum is not 100% inclusive and fails to share multiple worldwide perspectives. (ie. Indigenous population and Europeans)
- It's focused on westernized perceptions, culture, and history. Everything that is not that is in there as a comparison to western views, which communicates a bias to westernized culture. It's 2021 and we live in a global society. We need to look at things more holistically.
- There is a significant amount of religion that appears in the social studies curriculum. Of course, it is important to learn about certain aspects of these when the time is right and the students have learned enough regarding their own communities and ideas. For example, in about grade 7 or 8 social studies, it is important to understand why Europeans were dealing with the new world the way they did (i.e. religion). But, the absurd focus on Christianity is not something that should be learned in great detail in a public school classroom. Of course, understanding that it exists is very important, but not into the detail that the draft intends on going.
- There is absolutely no LGBTQ+ representation. A history of this is certainly more relevant now for younger students, how to understand that different people live on our society.
- No mention of LGBTQ orientation, not all kids are binary, give them a voice! Indigenous perspective added as a superficial afterthought in each section... shame on you!
- It does pay lip service to diversity by giving surface coverage to the cultures that have traditionally been taught in western education (Ancient Greece, France, China, Egypt),

but there's far too much emphasis on US history. I'd argue there's more US history than Canadian history in there - which is deeply disturbing (and likely due to the fact that most of Social Studies was copied from a US source). I'd also point out that there's little to no content about Africa or South America (outside of a tie-in to Mayan/Inca/Aztec/Montezuma traditions in grade 1 social studies). I do note that they appear to have tried to 'check the First Nations box' by adding some references in various parts of the curriculum (elders regularly listed as a source of information, for example) - but the tone with which non-Caucasian cultures are discussed is generally troubling. While I realize that wouldn't reach the children, I'm still not okay with white people being referred to as people but black people being referred to as 'blacks'.

- I believe that curriculum writers attempted to place diverse perspectives and cultures in the curriculum, however, there is way too much content so students will not be able to delve deeply into any of these outcomes to really understand perspective. Learning about perspective and culture takes time and there is no way a curriculum packed with so many outcomes will allow this to occur.
- There is very little facts or knowledge about other cultures, mostly just references in social. There are references to Greek culture, in drama, but it is the ancient Greeks. There is not much current or positive information about other cultures besides white Europeans.
- I feel that the curriculum should focus more on Canada and learning about our diversity and cultures, particularly Indigenous peoples. There has been so much in the news about the residential schools and truth and reconciliation I feel it is important for the students to learn about that time in our history so they can seek to understand rather than to keep the current narrative going surrounding our indigenous groups. I never learned a thing about residential schools when I went to school and I think that is a travesty. They deserve to be heard and understood and putting them in the curriculum as an afterthought is both disrespectful and narrow-minded. If you want to teach the kids about diversity and cultures, you should start with them but also continue on from there with regard to other important events in our history such as the Japanese Internment camps.
- Grab [a] dictionary sitting in your school and look up the term 'diverse'. You'll note that 'diverse perspective' doesn't mean 'the exact same perspective that teachers, the ATA and the NDP expect everyone to have.

3. Content Shift from Current to New Curriculum

3.1. PARENT SURVEY QUESTION

To what degree do you support the shift in content from the current curriculum to what you see in the Draft curriculum?

0% Strongly Agree with the change; 0% Somewhat Agree with the change; 0% Somewhat Disagreed with the change; 100% Strongly Disagreed with the change

3.2. General Comments

- I am opposed to a curriculum that would be about memorization vs. Thinking and Learning. Verbs in a curriculum are important. They are the “how” of the curriculum and make it come alive. Leave verbs in the curriculum.
- My biggest overall issue is that it leaves out the actual point of learning. I don’t want my child to memorize a bunch of random facts, I want him to be able to use critical thinking, research, analyze, etc. In the current curriculum, there is an overarching purpose to what is taught and this is missing entirely in the draft one - it seems like memorizing factotums is good enough and the entire purpose of education. This is a disservice to my child and I will be furious if he has to go through school with this garbage. He needs to be a responsible citizen who needs to learn how to learn and how to think critically, and this draft curriculum is an absolute failure in that regard.
- It looks like my children are going to be programmed to think, act, and behave a certain way with no room for individuality, creativity, or critical/free-thinking and that is very concerning. You simply cannot put all these children into one box and expect a good outcome unless you want them to lose ability to do those things I just mentioned and become like robots who are easily manipulated. Or is that the plan?
- This is teachers and unions having a hissy fit because the curriculum doesn't support their world view. A world view which is not shared by the majority of Albertans. [The] blatant attempt to scare monger and mislead parents is shameful, and it says a lot about credibility.
- Surface coverage of topics makes it hard for kids to get excited about a subject. Appears set up to strip the fun out of learning – so much inappropriate memorization.
- I had troubles understanding the main points of current and presented main concepts. They seems to be very one sided.
- Need to look at 21st century outcomes – what will help students succeed after school?
- Too much rote memorization and not age appropriate.
- Lots of questions about the competencies that have carried over (where are they actually reflected in the curriculum document?)
- Not excited about the memorization.
- Problematic that the content doesn’t naturally build on itself.
- More content in the curriculum to cover in a short period of time; just because there is more doesn’t mean it is better.
- The curriculum is much too dense so there will no time for students to engage in deep thinking or learning that considers multiple perspectives. At most, content will be brushed over at a speedy pace where limited opportunity for perspective taking will take place.
- Opposed to the 'back to basics' and fact memorization that is emphasized.

3.1 Specific to ELA

- Teaching that 'fiction = imaginary' and 'non-fiction = real' (permeates English curriculum) does not set children up to be critical thinkers in future. 'Non-fiction' includes many categories that are allegorical or opinion-based. To explain that concept in an age-appropriate way, stick to the writer's perspective: 'fiction = writer knows they're making up a story' and 'non-fiction = writer believes they're telling the truth'.

This both humanizes literature (it was written by a real person!) and sets students up to be critical thinkers later in life when they can start to ask questions like 'why did the writer believe this to be true?

- Support - Benefits of phonetic emphasis in early years in LA
- I am a strong proponent of having literacy and numeracy as the core skills that permeate the curriculum. I think this curriculum wants to believe it does that (so I applaud that goal), but I don't believe that it achieves it.

3.2 Specific to Mathematics

- Math -Support- it is good to learn harder concepts earlier; appropriate and helpful. (This individual stated they grew up in another country and math was harder where they came from, so is possible for kids to rise to the challenge).
- Math - Support - Like the emphasis on basic facts.
- Math - Support - I feel it is important for kids to learn about money and finances but not in the way the curriculum is proposing. I don't think my 8 and 6 year old kids need to learn how to write a business plan quite yet. They need to learn the importance of working to earn an income, how to allocate spending, how to save.
- Math curriculum lacks visual examples and comprehension.
- Math - Teaching the kids Imperial units but calling them 'Canadian units' makes it sound like they're the default in Canada (grade 3 math) when they certainly aren't. As a working scientist, I'd never even heard the term 'Canadian unit' until I Googled it and happened across the one obscure context in which it's relevant.
- Math - Deeply concerned by the lack of emphasis of visual strategies in the math curriculum as a whole. I do agree that memorization of times tables, etc. will be necessary at some point to 'fill in the gaps' that the student hasn't learned naturally through repeated use - but they shouldn't be the starting point; building the concept of multiplication is the starting point.

3.3 Specific to Social Studies

- I strongly support learning about global history and the major forces and events that have shaped the world we live in today.
- Social studies needs to start with "identity" and spiral out.
- Slavery and the KKK. - get their slogan out of the curriculum. Description of Alberta as mostly Christian.. get all religious ideology out of the curriculum. Geographical inaccuracies... Regina is in Sask. Capitalism framed as a shining light.. how about a factual look at other perspectives??
- Social Studies - Teaching kids to sympathize with the Ku Klux Klan (grade 6 social studies).
- Teaching kids that medieval society worked because the peasants loved the king (grade 2 social studies) when it actually worked because they feared the king and king's guards - this feels like trying to train our kids to be happy peasants.
- Teaching kids the map of medieval Europe before they learn the map of modern Europe (grade 2 social studies).

- Teaching kids that debt happens because of greed (grade 1 social studies); is it greedy to have a mortgage or take a business loan or student loan?
- Teaching kids about the US Declaration of Independence (grade 6 social studies) before they learn about Canadian Confederation (not covered in K-6).
- I believe in a separation of church and state, and value science of religious perspectives. Even the limited 'indigenous knowledge' to be taught in the draft curriculum constitutes mysticism and pseudo science that should have no place in the public school program. Unless we're going to invite every other religious groups, including the Scientologists, to also 'give their perspective' and let us know of their mystical powers and 'special connections' to the land. All well-intentioned no doubt, but doesn't stand up to scrutiny and is ultimately embarrassing coming from supposed professional educators. Leave the mysticism out of schools and in the churches, mosques, etc.

3.4 Specific to Science

- Science curriculum very surface – proposes one class on each topic once a year instead of diving into topics a bit more thoroughly so kids can get excited about it.
- Strongly opposed to the way in which the Science curriculum is organized. Rather than allowing for project-based learning and integration of concepts by focusing on a smaller number of topics each year (which admittedly sacrifices annual coverage of all but the most core topics), it seems to schedule one class per topic per year - which only allows for very surface discussion of it and most of that class will be wasted reminding the kids what they learned about the topic in the previous year's class. This is not how you develop a love of learning.

3.5 Specific to Music

- The music curriculum, especially related to the influence of African Americans in Jazz music is completely inaccurate and full of basic music fallacies. Get Mart Kenney out of there... he was a mediocre big band leader.
- Music - Shameful that there are music materials, such as the idea of rhythms and note values that are completely incorrect.

3.6 Specific to Wellness

- Wellness - Consent.. it is not up to the victim to refuse advances.. it is up to the abuser to recognize they are abusing!
- I am deeply opposed to having schools pretend that different sexual orientations don't exist (and leaving that to the parents). I'm not looking for detailed coverage of every possible orientation. But I want kids taught to value people as people, and I want the kid with two mommies (or two daddies) to feel like they belong in the classroom just as much as the kid with one mommy and one daddy.
- Health - Support - the more information the better (re: moving lessons on puberty earlier).