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December 15, 2021

Honourable Adriana LaGrange
Minister, Education
228 Legislature Building
10800 – 97 Avenue
Edmonton AB T5K 2B6

Dear Minister LaGrange:

Re: K-6 Draft Curriculum

The Calgary Board of Education (CBE) shares the government's goal of providing curriculum that prepares Alberta students for future success. To be successful in post-secondary education and/or the world of work, learners need to be engaged, critical thinkers and creative problem solvers.

We appreciate the announcement on Monday, Dec. 13, 2021 highlighting steps you are taking to strengthen the draft curriculum and adjust the implementation of some subjects.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to listen and respond to the feedback gathered. We are committed to doing our part to contribute to a successful curriculum. As requested by the Deputy Minister of Alberta Education in the fall of 2021, CBE Administration provided specific and meaningful feedback about the content and design of the K-6 draft curriculum through the College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS). Also this fall, the CBE Board of Trustees provided feedback on the implementation of the curriculum through the Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA). The CBE Draft K-6 Curriculum Overview Report, which is attached to this letter, provides further details.

Trustees heard many concerns about the K-6 draft curriculum from Calgarians during our election campaigns. The Board of Trustees has listened to parents, staff, experts, community members who have expressed significant concerns about the content and design of the K-6 draft curriculum including:

Content is not developmentally appropriate.

- There are concerns about how, and in which grades, some content and skills are included in the curriculum.

A lack of logical sequencing that allows concepts to be built upon from grade to grade

- The structure of the curriculum makes it difficult to see or make connections among content and skills within a grade, in one subject, across or between subject areas and across and between grades.
- The draft curriculum does not align to Alberta Education's Guiding Framework for the Design and Development of Kindergarten to Grade 12 Provincial Curriculum.

A lack of focus on critical thinking and future-focused skills

- Current educational research supports an emphasis on higher-level thinking, including the ability to reason, analyze, evaluate, and problem solve. Essentially, teaching students how to think, not what to think. These critical thinking skills are not evident in many areas of the draft curriculum.
- An emphasis on rote memorization in the draft curriculum puts Alberta students at a disadvantage when compared with other jurisdictions worldwide.

A lack of support for cultural diversity and inclusivity

- It is important to reflect cultural diversity and Indigenous perspectives throughout the curriculum and not link it solely to individual outcomes. It is also important that curriculum embraces inclusion and reflects the students we serve.

Unclear assessment expectations

- Implementation planning requires careful consideration for classroom assessment and provincial assessment and reporting.

While we are eager to implement a modern curriculum, in November the CBE fully supported the Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) resolution that the K-6 curriculum be revised and that a second draft be shared and tested with phased-in implementation to commence no sooner than 2024.

We appreciate that the ministry is delaying some subjects for the benefit of students across Alberta. In keeping with our primary focus on student success, we do have significant concerns about the September 2022 implementation timeline for Mathematics, English Language Arts and Literature, and Physical Education and Wellness.

Our concerns about commencing implementation next fall include:

- Our schools continue to face learning disruptions caused by the pandemic. Students have not experienced a "normal" school year for the past three years.
- Final drafts will not be available for parents, teachers and other Alberta stakeholders until spring 2022.
- Time is needed to develop age-appropriate student resources for the delivery of specific content. Significant expertise, time and resources is also required to seek out or adjust these resources to serve the learning needs of students with diverse learning needs.



- Time is required to develop and deliver professional learning that will prepare our teachers for success.
- Whether appropriate funding will be provided to school boards to ensure successful implementation in the classroom.

Providing resources across three subject areas and many grades is a monumental task to accomplish for fall 2022. A gradual, staggered approach to implementation would be appreciated. We strongly believe a phased-in implementation will provide the time required for school boards to work together with government to build these resources and to deliver the professional learning required.

We are encouraged that an advisory group to support curriculum implementation is being established. The CBE would be pleased to be a part of that group to provide input and ongoing support to Alberta Education. In the near future, we will also be providing feedback on the Social Studies blueprint.

Thank you for your dedication to listening to the voices of stakeholders. As a Board of Trustees, we want our provincial schools to deliver curriculum that supports our world class education system. We are confident that if the government incorporates the feedback gathered and takes the time required to implement the K-6 curriculum, the outcome will be a curriculum of which Albertans can all be proud.

Sincerely,



Laura Hack, Chair
Board of Trustees

Encl.

cc: Marilyn Dennis, President, Alberta School Boards Association
Dr. Vivian Abboud, Chief Executive Officer, Alberta School Boards Association
Christopher Usih, Chief Superintendent, Calgary Board of Education





Draft Curriculum Review Briefing

Purpose

On Aug. 6, 2020 Alberta Education released its Ministerial Order on Student Learning which set in motion the new curriculum vision. On March 29, 2021, Minister of Education, the Honourable Adriana LaGrange released the draft Kindergarten to Grade 6 (K-6) curriculum, which is available for review at www.alberta.ca/curriculum.

As the largest public school board in Alberta, the CBE believes it is vitally important to provide Alberta Education with feedback on the draft curriculum. This fall CBE Administration provided specific and detailed feedback on curriculum content through CASS as requested by the Deputy Minister. The Board also provided feedback on implementation and resources through ASBA. The CBE has been clear that we support the goal of strengthening the curriculum to prepare students for the future

CBE Administration has provided extensive and detailed feedback on outcomes in subject areas through the College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS) report being prepared for the Deputy Minister.

The purpose of this document is to provide a discipline-specific breakdown of relevant issues associated with each of the courses provided in the draft. Key considerations for implementation have also been included. This document is not a comprehensive review of specific outcomes but some specific examples have been included.

Overarching Themes

The following section provides highlights of the overarching considerations reflected across all subject areas of the draft curriculum.

Architecture and Design

- The format and organization of the draft curriculum does not articulate literacy and numeracy connections or competencies in each subject area, and as such does not align with the [Guiding Framework for the Design and Development of Kindergarten to Grade 12 Provincial Curriculum](#).
- Shortened subject introductions provide limited insight into the subjects and how they differ as ways of knowing.
- The structure of the curriculum makes it difficult to see or make connections among content and skills within a grade, in one subject, across or between subject areas and across and between grades.
- Alignment and development of key concepts across subject areas is largely absent creating the conditions for disjointed instruction wherein students cannot fully access the content.

Competencies

- Twenty-first century competencies: critical thinking, problem solving, managing information, creativity, and innovation are not evident in many areas of the draft curriculum.

- Current educational research supports an emphasis on higher-level thinking, including the ability to reason, analyze, evaluate, and problem solve.
- There is an emphasis on rote-memorization of discreet points of knowledge as opposed to building a balanced foundation of knowledge with a progression of higher-level thinking skills.

Developmental Appropriateness

- There are concerns about how, and in which grades, some content and skills are included in the curriculum. Overall, the content load is heavy, disconnected, and does not support appropriate learning progressions for elementary students. The amount of content is dense, leaving little or no room for teachers to be able to account for or connect to local community context, personalize instruction, include student voice and provide for student choice.

Digital Literacy

- Living in the twenty-first century involves using technology to access, navigate, manage information, interact with others, think critically, act ethically, and create knowledge. The new draft curriculum does not adequately address the use of technology for learning and often treats using technology as optional (see [Brown & Jacobsen](#), University of Calgary). It also does not reflect the use of technology to support student-centred, personalized, authentic learning (see [Learning and Technology Policy Framework](#), Alberta Education).
- There is an oversimplification of the use of technology for learning that does not align with the progression of outcomes, skills, and critical thinking in the [ICT Program of Studies](#).
- The draft curriculum is limited in the way it addresses: digital competencies such as navigating, researching, collaborating, decision making, and problem solving in online environments; digital citizenship concepts including online safety, security, ethical use of technology, and personal privacy; and digital and media literacies (from [MediaSmarts](#)) such as accessing and analyzing alternative viewpoints, thinking critically about advertising, and evaluating the purpose and accuracy of online sources.

Inclusion

- The content choices (texts, authors, historical figures, stories, people, songs, resources) in the draft do not reflect the CBE definition of diversity, which is the full range of uniqueness within humanity. All students deserve an equal opportunity to connect with the material, and they do that when they are afforded the opportunity to see themselves and others in the content. Content choices across the disciplines represent a narrow version of identity.
- There is a notable absence of perspectives and learning as it relates to LGBTQ2S+ communities. The omission of these important groups from this curriculum makes it difficult for gender and sexually diverse or questioning young people to feel that they have a place in the world and creates a misconception among many students that sexually and gender diverse people do not exist or are in some way inferior.
- The proposed draft is inaccessible to children with complex learning profiles. The overall density of the draft curriculum creates challenges for students who need time and practice to demonstrate understanding. Due to the level of specificity and narrow scope in some areas, teachers may find it challenging to enrich and/or differentiate for children who require accommodation, as well as English Language Learners.



Indigenous Perspectives

- Overall, there is a lack of acknowledgement that the curriculum drafts are written from a Eurocentric worldview. This positions that perspective as “the” worldview that is assumed and therefore, continues a colonized approach to curriculum that does not support the commitment to the Calls to Action for Truth and Reconciliation. It also serves to further the “othering” of Indigenous communities by highlighting the differences between their cultures and mainstream culture rather than the similarities.
- The way Indigenous perspectives are included in the curriculum pan-Indigenizes Indigenous cultures and traditions by not being specific in mentioning which particular nations or groups practice the tradition being mentioned.
- Portrayals of Indigenous cultures position them only in the past through the absence of contemporary portrayals and considerations. This has the potential to feed into pervasive stereotypes that Indigenous communities already face and further the erasure of Indigenous peoples today.
- Other damaging ways that Indigenous cultures are portrayed include romanticizing, oversimplification, condescension, and failing to acknowledge or teach the deeper understandings of Indigenous culture that inform the more noticeable aspects such as art, dance, and music.
- There is an absence of Indigenous perspectives/pedagogy/ways of thinking which leads to simply learning “about” rather than learning “with” or “through” Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing.

Kindergarten/Early Learning

- The current kindergarten curriculum is complemented by a guiding document called the Kindergarten Program Statement which aligns with learner outcomes while also providing guidance around pedagogy --both rationale and philosophy -- that support strong early childhood programming. There is no Kindergarten Program Statement to accompany the new curriculum.
- The new curriculum addresses curricular content through Knowledge, Understanding, and Skills and Procedures (KUS’s); however, it does not address methods or approaches to learning that support developmentally appropriate practice and the role of play in curriculum meaning making, (see [Flight Alberta’s Early Learning and Care Framework](#)).
- There are concerns that some content is not developmentally appropriate and there are several inconsistencies in KUS’s between disciplines.

Discipline-Specific Considerations

What follows is subject-specific information that gives context and examples of further concerns. In some cases, specific examples and/or links to additional information and resources have been provided.

Art

The inclusion of the creative process, of giving and receiving feedback, and a clear articulation and sequencing of the basic elements of art are present. Knowledge about art

and art history from a Eurocentric perspective, as opposed to creation and exploration of foundational concepts, is overemphasized in this draft.

- Within visual art, students should spend most of their time actively doing art, as a means to understanding themselves, their world, and the elements of art. This draft places **knowledge of art before exploration** and creation of art. For example, it is not until Grade 6 that students are required to create art for enjoyment.
- While the **inclusion of art history** is appreciated, this section in all the fine art disciplines is dense and it is not presented in a manner that promotes active artistic and historical thinking about broad organizing concepts. For example, exploration of landscapes by diverse artists, past and present, may lead to a fuller understanding about linear perspective as opposed to learning that Renaissance artists used linear perspective. A consequence of the amount of historical knowledge content in the draft may require teachers to skim or survey the content as opposed to develop a deeper analysis and understanding of meaningful concepts with students.
- Students in K-6 benefit from exploring concepts in and through different disciplines; however, in the draft, there is little **coherence** between the art appreciation (history and culture) outcomes and topics of study in other disciplines. For example, Grade 3 includes Ancient Roman art, Grade 4 includes art from the Middle Ages, and Grade 5 includes art from the Renaissance, all historical eras that are not instructed in Social Studies in these grades.
- The inclusion of the **concept of narrative** within all the fine art disciplines is appreciated; however, it does not appear until Grade 4. The outcomes in K to 3 focus on 'ideas' and 'messages'. This presents a deficit view of children and their ability to tell stories at all ages.
- The draft makes vague reference to **digital technologies** and digital competencies in creating, sharing, viewing, and collaborating on art. A new curriculum should include explicit references and support exploration of various types of creative technologies for even the very youngest students. The current draft is not inclusive of students who may utilize technology and/or assistive technology to engage in art creation.
- The **content knowledge** within the history and culture sections are extensive, not well-sequenced, and not organized by accessible concepts (e.g. community, change). Furthermore, the art specific knowledge is overly extensive. For example, in Grade 5, there are over 35 outcomes concerning colour alone.
- There is an **over emphasis on passive learning** about art and art history (identify, discuss) as opposed to more active, participatory learning that asks students to justify, analyze or critique art.
- The concepts of **ethical engagement and appropriation are not addressed**, and conflicting messages are given. For example, kindergarten students are taught that artistic ideas can be borrowed, but it is not until Grade 6 that students are taught to give credit to other artists that have been used as inspiration.
- The art appreciation outcomes are **overly Eurocentric, colonial, and imbalanced from a gender perspective**, and do not leave enough space for teachers and students to design learning about artists that meaningfully enrich other learning or exemplify local experiences and histories. Where non-Eurocentric perspectives are shared, they are reduced to discrete facts or examples in a manner that promotes "looking at" or "learning about" as opposed to "learning with" or "learning from". When Indigenous



examples are shared, they rarely include artists or art works from Indigenous communities or treaty lands within Alberta.

- There is little opportunity for **inclusive learning**, for students (especially Indigenous, Black and Person of Colour and LGBTQ+ students), to find meaningful connection to the curriculum. It also presents art as something that happens within the walls of a classroom and does not support land or place-based experiences, nor does it suggest that students explore art and art spaces within their communities.

Drama and Dance

The inclusion of basic dance and drama knowledge, the direction to use a variety of stimuli as inspiration, and the acknowledgement that dance and drama can communicate ideas, messages, and narratives are appreciated. Due to the extensive amount of discipline-specific and historical knowledge outlined, these optional programs of studies will not be easily integrated into classrooms by generalist teachers with little to no formal education in drama and dance.

An optional program of studies in dance and drama needs to allow students to express creativity and imagination, take measured risks, play, tell stories, develop physical and dance literacy, and spark joy in lifelong learning and appreciation of the art form. There is a lot of material in the draft that does not relate to the above points.

- There is a heavy focus on **preplanned and counted movements** throughout the dance draft contrasted with little mention of students experiencing and responding to a variety of music, rhythms, tempos, accents and beats.
- This curriculum places **artistic knowledge before exploration and creation**. The amount of historical knowledge does not provide adequate room and time for dancing and acting by students. For example, although the Social Studies curriculum in Grade 4 is concerned with the history of Alberta, in the dance program, students are required to develop knowledge of dances in medieval Europe and medieval Islam including pagan, common, religious, and secular dances. Developing knowledge and skills of the given list of dances promotes surface-level treatment resting on students doing a lot of watching medieval dance as opposed to actively engaging in dance.
- Some outcomes are **developmentally inappropriate**; for example, asking students to create symmetrical shapes with their bodies in Grade 2 when they do not learn the concept of symmetry in math until Grade 4.
- There are large parts of the drama program that place **technical knowledge above creativity**, exploration and imagination. For example, Grades 5 and 6 place too much emphasis on production and technical theatre such as memorized stage directions.
- The curricula are void of explicit references and support of various **educational and creative technologies** as students develop their innovative competencies to both create, produce, and present narratives.
- There is a clear **Eurocentric bias** when it comes to actively appreciating and engaging in Francophone, Métis, Inuit, and First Nations dances. For example, in the Grade 4 and 5 dance curriculum, students must 'discuss, observe, explain, experience, and examine' First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and Canadian colonial dances but they are required to 'participate' in dances from the medieval and Renaissance eras. This places Indigenous art forms as something to look at and learn about as opposed to learning with and from Indigenous artists and knowledge keepers.



- The focus on counting, preplanning and technique is a **colonial view of the dance artform**. Lacking is an incorporation of other knowledge systems which would lead to culturally sensitive task design and cross-curricular learning. For example, in West African dance, dancers respond to the changing rhythms of the drums, rather than pre-planning or counting movements.

English Language Arts and Literature (ELAL)

There are some strengths reflected in the ELAL curriculum specific to reading. The curriculum was built in part from the research that supports the explicit instruction of foundational reading skills (phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension). This attention to reading skills is more detailed and intentional than in the current Program of Studies and is supportive of continued improvement in foundational reading skills for students.

- The **organizing idea headings** (text forms, vocabulary, writing, oral language, comprehension, conventions, phonics, phonological awareness) provide logical categories for ease of access for educators. However, there is inconsistent alignment between the other organizational headings of understanding, knowledge and skills and procedures.
- There is an increased emphasis on **foundational literacy skills** (phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, spelling), which are clearly articulated and provide a sequential learning progression.
- **Phonological awareness** is included as a separate and distinct category in K-2. This includes a clear focus on the identification and manipulation of sounds in oral language that are the prerequisite skills needed in learning to read.
- **Vocabulary** outcomes include clear expectations and development across grades. These include an emphasis on morphology (word parts such as prefixes, suffixes, base words) as well as figurative language (literary devices and techniques such as similes, metaphors, alliteration).

Outside of the strengths listed above, there remain areas of concern. The ELAL outcomes are more granular and knowledge-based as compared to the current curriculum. The specificity and knowledge-driven design results in outcomes that lack a focus on higher-level thinking as outlined in many of the competencies in the guiding framework. Intentional language that asks students to justify, analyze or critique are neglected in this curriculum.

- **Digital literacy and media literacy** skills (see [MediaSmarts](#)) as well as Alberta Education's [Student Competencies](#) are underrepresented. This means students are not exposed to skills such as the ability to analyze the legitimacy of digital content in advertising and social media. In addition, there is a lack of emphasis on opportunities for students to learn using multi-modal content.
- The **works of literature and authors** referred to as “great works” are primarily focused on European culture and history (Greek, Roman, Renaissance, Shakespeare) with little connection to students' interest and relevance to their own lived experiences (Grades 5-6).
- **Oral language** is separately organized with a heavy emphasis on public speaking, including memorization and delivery of oral presentations. The delivery of oral presentations focuses on elements such as calming techniques, eye contact, facial expressions, posture, and rhythm which favor a Western ideology and way of thinking.

The emphasis on public speaking overshadows the importance of dialogue, exchanging ideas, asking questions, and stating opinions which help students build understanding and thinking skills.

- There is little attention paid to the building and maintenance of **literacy engagement** and motivation which directly influences literacy development and achievement. Specifically absent are outcomes related to exercising choice and interest in what is read and written as well as including texts of various genres.
- Explicit attention to **students' background, preferences or identity is limited** in the ELAL curriculum. The importance of texts that provide understandings of the lived experiences of others and opportunities to connect with books that mirror their own experiences is not acknowledged.
- **Indigenous perspectives** are limited or incidental. This curriculum poorly represents the various traditions and ways of knowing in many unique Indigenous groups. In particular, the oral traditions of Indigenous communities are simplistic or completely inaccurate in the oral language portion of each grade.

Français immersion et littérature (FIL)

A large part of the Français immersion et littérature curriculum from kindergarten to Grade 6 is identical to the Français langue première et littérature draft curriculum, which is designed for first language speakers. This level is too challenging and does not respond to the language background of students learning French as a second language in a minority setting. This problem exists with the current French Language Arts curriculum and has not been addressed in the new revision.

The draft for FIL is only available in French, making it inaccessible to most parents and caregivers with children in French Immersion Programs. The Français immersion et littérature draft is not ready but has a preliminary foundation for further development.

- The subject introduction is vague and missing key components such as an articulated **philosophy** of the FIL Program of Studies. It is essential for teachers to understand the **structure and organization** of the FIL in a way that makes clear relationships between the guiding questions and the organized ideas.
- This draft has a primary **focus on the study of language** (e.g. grammatical elements) and reading skills. It does not adequately reflect communicative uses of language that integrate speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing, representing and so on. The language used in the grammar section is highly academic and technical, which poses problems of interpretation for teachers, caregivers and students.
- There is a **lack of outcomes that promote higher-order thinking**. While students are required to find, identify and recognize, they are rarely asked to produce, interpret or create. Skills and procedures listed are not easily adaptable to learners with exceptionalities.
- Learning outcomes are **not developmentally appropriate** for the age groups, particularly because they largely reflect expectations for Francophone students, rather than second language learners.



- The **representation** of Francophone language and culture does not reflect the vast diversity of the Francophonie. It is also challenging to find integration of Indigenous perspectives. There is a lack of specific language and literature connections to develop global citizenship and intercultural competence.

Mathematics

The draft K-6 curriculum, in general, contains foundational content for school mathematics. The shortened subject introduction and structure of the curriculum does not clearly present a rich, comprehensive representation of the discipline of mathematics. The mathematical processes inherent to the discipline, such as problem solving, reasoning and communication, are absent from the overall framework of the curriculum.

- There are not consistent **research-informed learning progressions** towards some outcomes. There is an introduction of standard algorithms and formulas without attention to the learning progression required to produce fluency with understanding for those algorithms.
- Understanding and skills required for **numeracy** are absent or not as evident as they could be. This includes an absence of some content, such as concepts and skills related to probability. Understanding of probability is crucial for students to develop data literacy in order to be numerate citizens. In addition, numeracy requires strong number sense and flexibility with numbers that is not developed through a sole focus on standard algorithms and formulas.
- The inclusion of financial literacy is an improvement in terms of developing numeracy in students.
- There is inclusion of more **specific and accurate mathematical language** which can support both student and teacher understanding of concepts. (E.g., identifying “arithmetic or geometric sequences” can support deeper understanding and more precise communication than the current use of the terms “increasing or decreasing patterns”.)
- Some of the statements as written **lack clarity** and will require significant support for teachers to understand what is intended by those outcomes at their grade level. (E.g., Grade 1 knowledge statement, “The length of empty space between two points is called distance.”)
- Throughout the Mathematics draft curriculum, changes have been made to both the **content** included and the grades in which content is introduced. In some cases, the content has been introduced in lower grades in developmentally appropriate ways with consideration of learning progressions. (E.g., the inclusion of time and fractions, starting in Kindergarten and Grade 1 respectively, in appropriate contextual and concrete ways.) In other cases, the content has been included or shifted in ways that are not addressed in developmentally appropriate ways. (E.g., the introduction of formulas as “knowledge” the first year the content is introduced, such as the division of fractions in Grade 6.)
- Explicit mention of **First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspectives** has shifted from the front matter/subject introduction to specific learning outcomes. The removal of a more holistic description of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit views to specific statements or tasks for students to perform is superficial and does not foster deep levels of understanding. (E.g., Grade 4, the task of “Recognize the rearrangement of area in



First Nations, Métis, or Inuit design” is a very low-level task and does not lead to the learner developing a deeper understanding of Indigenous perspectives of mathematics.)

- There are some learning outcomes that limit **accessibility** for all students as they do not allow students to represent their thinking and understanding in multiple ways. This impacts students with diverse learning needs, as well as Indigenous students and English Language Learners who come from different and valid cultural understandings and strategies. (E.g., the required use of standard algorithms as the only acceptable strategy for computation in some Division II learning outcomes can affect how culturally and personally responsive learning experiences are. Students are not encouraged to think critically about the numbers or context and select efficient strategies that might be used personally or in different cultures or contexts.)

Music

The inclusion of music knowledge and skills and the acknowledgement that music can communicate ideas, messages, and narratives are appreciated. The draft also attempts to connect art and music history. The music history topics and example pieces are not meaningfully connected with social studies and lack inclusivity. The music knowledge sections are overly complex and developmentally inappropriate.

- During music classes, students should spend the majority of their time actively making music. This curriculum places knowledge about music before **exploration and creation of music**. For example, in Grade 2, students are introduced to accelerando, ritardando, crescendo, decrescendo, staccato, and legato. In response to this knowledge, students are asked to “identify”, “differentiate”, “use vocabulary” and “discuss”. In the following outcome section, students are asked to “respond in a variety of ways when actively listening for changes in dynamics and tempo”. The draft places knowledge and discussion about these musical terms above time spent actively enjoying, creating, and collaborating while listening to, singing, and playing music.
- There are **inaccuracies** in the way foundational music concepts are explained and presented; for example, the draft uses the word ‘patching’ when the correct word is [‘patschen’](#).
- While the **inclusion of music history** is appreciated, this section in all the Fine Art disciplines is too dense and it is not presented in a manner that would promote active musical thinking about broad organizing concepts nor are the outcomes meaningfully related to topics of study in other disciplines. For example, Grade 3 includes Ancient Roman music and Grade 4 includes music from Medieval Islam, both historical eras that are not addressed nor linked to Social Studies outcomes in these grades.
- There is a **lack of developmentally appropriate sequencing** of outcomes. For example, Grade 1 students are asked to respond to a steady beat through “actions”, “playing instruments”, “moving”, and “body percussion”. The draft presents body percussion as “clapping, snapping, patching (sic), stomping and rubbing” and asks Grade 1 students to demonstrate rhythm using body percussion or instrument playing. These outcomes may not be achievable for many students as even clapping to a beat is difficult for many of our earliest learners. Some physical exploration of beat through patschen and some instrumentation is more appropriate at these levels.
- The **music appreciation outcomes** are overly Eurocentric, colonial, imbalanced from a gender perspective and do not leave enough space for teachers and students to



design learning about music and musicians that meaningfully enrich other learning or exemplify local experiences and histories. Indigenous music is presented as something to listen to or learn about as opposed to learning with and from Indigenous artists and knowledge keepers. [See AMAA](#)

- There is no meaningful inclusion of **music technology** other than a few mentions of digital media in the knowledge section. The draft does not present the use of technology to increase accessibility or to experience, share, or create a narrative through sound and music.

Science

The organization of science content in the draft K-6 curriculum is around the main concepts of scientific branches (i.e., matter, energy, Earth systems, living systems, space, scientific methods, computer science), which is a shift from a focus on topics. The shortened subject introduction and structure of the curriculum does not clearly present a rich, comprehensive representation of the discipline of science.

- The draft K-6 curriculum has been written from a **Eurocentric worldview**. There is no acknowledgement that science, as a knowledge system as we understand it, was developed from within a Eurocentric worldview.
- There is a lack of recognition of diverse scientific ideas and contributions. Some ideas are only mentioned in relation to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, which leads to “othering.” As a whole, the Science curriculum **fails to acknowledge the existence of Indigenous science perspectives**, let alone present them in a way that promotes their validity. Where Indigenous perspectives are mentioned, it is done so in a way that reduces them to typical and expected stereotypes. Indigenous relationships to and/or understandings of the natural environment are over simplified. (E.g., Grade 3, knowledge statement, “First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities respectfully use natural materials.” Respectful use of natural materials is not mentioned in relation to any other group of people and Indigenous relationships to natural materials go far beyond simple respectful use of them.)
- Some statements, as written, are **inaccurate** and will lead to misconceptions. (E.g., in Grade 1, “Speed can be... -stopped.” Motion or movement is stopped, speed is how fast an object is moving.)
- There is an **overemphasis on lower-level thinking skills** or passive learning as opposed to more active learning. Many of the skills and procedures do not allow or require students to be actively engaged. Such verbs as research, identify, relate, and describe are passive and can be done without engaging in scientific investigations.
- Some content is introduced too early, and/or **not age or developmentally appropriate**. (E.g., Grade 3 under knowledge: “Newton’s first law of motion states that an object that is at rest will stay at rest until some force makes it move; and an object that is in motion will stay in motion until a force stops it.” Newton’s laws are currently introduced in high school (Physics 20).)
- There is a **lack of alignment between subjects**. Some of the skills included in the draft Science curriculum do not align with Mathematics, resulting in students being asked to perform skills in which they have not yet developed understanding. (E.g., Grade 5 Science, students are to “measure the volume of liquids using appropriate

instruments and standard units of measurement,” while capacity and volume are not introduced in Mathematics until Grade 6.)

- **Computer science** is primarily interpreted as following instructions. Coding is absent in younger grades and not introduced until Grades 5 and 6. According to the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), when coding is [integrated into learning for young students](#) in a developmentally appropriate way, it builds [computational thinking](#) (definition from ISTE). Furthermore, this curriculum reduces the complexities of coding to mechanical processes and paper and pencil tasks. A deep understanding of coding requires the use of technology so students can make connections between the code they write and the output of the programs they create. Using technology to code is critical to testing, iterating, and problem solving. It is important to note that coding is just one aspect of computational thinking, and this curriculum does not address the wider applications that extend beyond a single subject area to multiple disciplines.
- There are concerns about the **amount of content** in all grades, which does not allow for depth of understanding in developmentally appropriate ways. (E.g., Current curriculum in Grade 4 has a unit about two simple machines - wheels and levers. Draft curriculum in Grade 3 includes levers, wheels, axles, inclined planes and wedges within an outcome about contact forces, along with other content. The Skill and Procedures statement “Represent contact force in relation to the use of simple machines through diagrams,” is not a developmentally appropriate task as it requires students to have a deep and thorough understanding of how simple machines function to apply understanding of contact forces in an abstract way.)

Social Studies

The following provides a basis for analysis of the draft Social Studies curriculum.

For background and information on the discipline of Social Studies itself, please reference [Powerful and Purposeful Elementary Social Studies](#) from the National Council for the Social Studies.

- The draft does not reflect well-established or current scholastic approaches in social studies education. **Twenty-first century skills** and processes fundamental to any social studies curriculum (i.e., critical thinking and creative thinking, historical thinking, geographic thinking, decision making, problem solving, cooperation, conflict resolution, consensus building, social involvement, research and information, oral, written and visual literacy, and media literacy) are not appropriately referenced nor are they built into the outcomes and learning progressions. These competencies appear in the current curriculum and in the [Student Competencies in Social Studies](#) (Alberta Education).
- [Digital literacy](#) and [media literacy](#) (see [MediaSmarts](#)) to support **critical thinking** are absent in the Social Studies draft. Learning to evaluate and use digital sources to research historical and current issues, conduct analyses, sort fact from fiction, examine diverse viewpoints, and think critically about news and social media are not included.
- Social studies as a discipline contains a **developmental scope and sequence** that begins with a young person’s understanding of their family, community, and onto their city, province, country, and so on. This concentric circle pattern is the foundation of geographical thinking (my house, my street, my city, and so on) and also historical thinking, which begins with the self in the same way geography does; those case studies closest to the self and family come first and then more abstract time periods (i.e., those further in the past or farther away from the child’s home) are tackled in later



grades. Neither of these learning progressions, tenets of social studies education, are observed in the draft curriculum.

- The topics that have been chosen (Ancient Civilizations, Ancient Greece and Rome, Medieval and Renaissance Europe, etc.) are **not developmentally accessible** to children in this age group, and concepts are not scaffolded. Concepts and individual topics should be developed in scope over several grades. Experience with the current Social Studies curriculum develops the concept of democracy in Ancient Greece in Grade 6 and the complexities of the Renaissance in Grade 8. Both of these areas of study require careful development even as applied at the current grades. Shifting those historical case studies to Grades 1 and 2 does not set students up for success in their learning nor does it set a foundation of understanding and applying the concepts central to Social Studies.
- In the current Social Studies curriculum, key attributes of **social studies concepts** are identified (example: *culture* is a human response to nature, changes over time, refers to many aspects of society, shapes our beliefs, values and actions, etc.) and provides students with opportunities to experience the concept through example (historical, social and political case study as well as current affairs). As children mature, the concepts and case studies become more complex and abstract as they build on previous learning. Key elementary Social Studies concepts like: beliefs, belonging, causality, citizenship, community, conflict, cooperation, culture, diversity, discrimination, equality, fairness, family, multiculturalism, safety, time, tradition, values, are unpacked in developmentally appropriate stages. These fundamental concepts and any relevant learning progressions that would support students in learning them, are missing from this draft curriculum.
- The **emphasis on rote memorization** of historical events, people and places is developmentally inappropriate – children of elementary school age are not able to recall and explain information that is out of their realm of conceptual understanding. Nor does that kind of learning have anything to do with Social Studies. At any grade level, this pedagogical focus would be inappropriate for a modern Social Studies curriculum, but it is even more problematic at the elementary level as it excludes all but one specific highly capable type of learner, and focuses on the development of a singular set of skills.
- There is a disproportionate focus on **religion and religious content**, inappropriate for the public primary school setting. Learning *about* world religions at an age where children can grasp the complex societal functions of religious institutions can lead to important understandings of multiple perspectives as well as world and historical events, which is why religious studies courses are traditionally taught in high school. The draft curriculum offers a Christian-dominant narrative that positions Christianity as both central and factual where others are presented as beliefs - “Jews *believe* in one God” vs. “Jesus Christ *is the* son of God.” The volume and tenor of religious content that focuses almost exclusively on three monotheistic religions are not inclusive of the many other religions practiced in Alberta, nor the more than 30 per cent of Albertans who claim no religious affiliation. Overall the draft equates belief systems with religion which is inaccurate and limiting.
- The draft curriculum is Eurocentric, meaning, the **focus is on Europe and Europeans**, and the narrative is told from a European and European-settler perspective. Europeans are presented as the central and most important global culture (politically, religiously, economically, socially), and the historical narrative, as Dr. Dwayne Donald points out, reads as “*a moral success story of Western culture.*” Research in curriculum development tells us that championing European culture, history and accomplishments,



particularly in a manner that involves little critical thinking or analysis, has a negative impact on both students who represent the dominant culture and children who are from backgrounds that represent a wide variety of races, ethnicities, cultures, classes, religions, sexualities, genders, abilities, and other areas of marginalization.

- **Indigenous inclusion** is particularly problematic, reducing the contributions of Indigenous peoples to special interest and historical events. There is no mention of treaties, Residential Schools, or reconciliation in the K-2 portion of the curriculum. Most references to Indigenous peoples are in the past, with little to no examples of contemporary communities, an error we know continues to contribute to student misconception. The inclusion of Indigenous content does not lend itself to a meaningful understanding of Indigenous perspectives, experiences or ways of knowing.
- Examples of **Indigenous oppression and genocide in Canada are minimized** in a manner that disguises the true severity of them while completely omitting certain aspects altogether. Histories affecting Indigenous peoples are whitewashed by means of downplaying or omitting significant instances of genocide and oppression and/or their true intent. Historical events are referred to through a settler perspective and do not encourage the seeking out of Indigenous perspectives and experiences surrounding those events/histories. Indigenous histories are explained without the inclusion of anyone from that particular community to share their perspective, leading to contentious versions of history being presented as objective (for example, discussion of the Iroquois, Bering Strait theory).
- There is a notable absence of any content relating to the perspectives and experiences of **LGBTQ2S+ communities**. The omission of these important groups from this curriculum makes it difficult for gender and sexually diverse or questioning young people to feel that they have a place in the world. It also creates a misconception among many students that sexually and gender diverse people do not exist or are in some way inferior.
- In addition to being Eurocentric and having problematic Indigenous content, the parts of the draft that attempt to address **Black history in Canada** are severely limited, lacking in substance and depth or an anti-racist perspective. Ancient or medieval African civilizations are omitted. Black people first appear in the Social Studies curriculum as persons enslaved in New France, framing people of African descent as being important to the story only in their role as a European commodity. The outcomes use offensive and outdated terms (i.e., "slaves" and "blacks" rather than "enslaved people" and "Black people"). Passive language is used to describe racism experienced by Black people ("racism, discrimination, and exclusion were everyday realities") obscuring *who* is committing the racist discrimination against these Black Canadians and *why*. The outcomes associated with KKK propaganda techniques are without context or an unpacking of the impact of the KKK as a domestic terrorist group. Stories of resistance and resiliency recommended by anti-racist curriculum research are severely lacking.

Physical Education and Wellness

The intent of the proposed physical education and wellness draft curriculum is to 'promote the whole individual and aims to nurture students in their pursuit of a healthy and active life', however the draft falls short in laying a suitable foundation of this aim for a variety of key reasons.

The combination of the former physical education and health and life skills curriculum may allow for a concept-based approach to instruction and may even increase time for physical



activity. The crux of this, however, is that significant subject matter expertise is needed to be able to adequately interpret the learning outcomes and, more specifically, the skills and procedures associated within each outcome. Without a scope and sequence, an established guide to implementation or identified and adequate time allotments, the proposed draft becomes problematic.

- Alberta is considered a leading jurisdiction among health promotion practitioners who specialize in comprehensive school health. Comprehensive school health is an internationally recognized and well researched understanding on how to support student well-being through whole-school strategies. The **absence of comprehensive school health**, which exists in the present-day curriculum 'as a desirable approach', reduces schools' abilities to sufficiently promote student well-being.
- Though it is critical to teach and learn about the importance of **mental health**, the term is used throughout the draft in an inconsistent manner and without an adequate introduction, nor progression from one grade to the next.
- The understanding of **well-being** is critical in a sound wellness curriculum, however, like mental health, the term is used inconsistently and does not address the holistic nature of well-being. The proposed draft only positions physical well-being (and inconsistently, emotional well-being) as a contributor to overall health. The concept of 'dimensions of well-being' is absent from the draft, and though a Eurocentric view, it does provide similarities to other world views such as Indigenous perspectives of well-being. Though there are several important dimensions of well-being absent in the proposed draft, most noticeably absent is the concept of spiritual well-being.
- It is concerning that learning about **body image** is missing in the proposed draft curriculum. Except for a brief mention in Grade 4, concepts of puberty and body image are absent. Instead, concepts that are detrimental to understanding body image, and those that may lead to disordered eating, body shaming and weight-based bullying are presented. Simply, there is an over emphasis on body weight and body size, with developmentally inappropriate knowledge at a developmentally vulnerable time.
- The explicit teaching of **consent** may be considered a positive step in the proposed draft curriculum, though the concept of consent is nothing new to early learning. 'Asking for permission' is a concept taught very early in many settings and has been for some time. Except for 2-3 weak examples, consent is positioned within the proposed draft curriculum from the position of 'giving permission' and *not* 'asking for permission'. Consent is presented as part of the 'safety rules', however it needs to be about healthy relationships and feeling good.
- **Sexuality** is a holistic concept that includes many factors and requires understanding of topics such as, healthy relationships, self-image, sex, gender identity and personality. In the proposed draft, elements that would typically be associated with sexual health have become unhealthy, exclusionary, binary and are presented in a heteronormative way. Subject matter is presented as deficits based, have taken on an intercourse focused approach to sexuality and, in some cases, are discriminatory. The idea of 'self-control is a necessary virtue' is a heavily faith-based concept that erodes the ability to learn about healthy sexual relationships. Faith-biased understandings continue to label process within this proposed draft. For example, pregnancy is referred to as a natural process while birth control is categorized as artificial. Further, the specific use of abstinence is inaccurate and presented as a moral/values based ideal rather than one option with specific advantages.
- **Digital citizenship** and digital safety are oversimplified and isolated to this area of the curriculum. The related understandings, skills, and procedures are limited or missing. It



does not reflect the depth of skill and understanding or include the grade level progressions found in the [ICT Program of Studies](#).

- Focusing on **harms of internet use and social media** positions these tools as negative. Examples such as, discussing the 'negative consequences of viewing explicit media' or asking students to 'identify potential harms from online and social media use and explain how to deal with unwanted communication or images' is a harmful, deficit approach which does not encourage healthy relationships or behaviours.
- The inclusion of **First Nation, Métis, and Inuit perspectives** are positioned in a tokenistic way that make their inclusion in this section appear to be an afterthought rather than a relevant component incorporated in a thought out and appropriate manner. This will only serve to further cause alienation between cultures rather than promoting a true understanding or awareness between them. Additionally, these mentions are frequently inaccurate and misrepresenting.

Implementation Considerations

The following section provides key considerations for implementation of the draft curriculum across all subjects and grades in the context of the current draft design and in the midst of challenges associated with the global pandemic. While we are eager to implement a more modern curriculum, we know that reviewing, considering and reflecting this feedback in a new draft will take time.

The curriculum as written poses insurmountable challenges in both content and design. Any recommendations for implementation are provided based on the assumption that the Ministry will make the necessary and full-scale changes to ensure a viable, developmentally appropriate, and future-facing curriculum appropriate for Alberta students.

COVID-19 Context

Since March 2020, students across all grade levels have and continue to experience high levels of disruption to learning. The implementation of a range of health measures, required operational adjustments, along with pressures within community and family environments have had significant impacts on student learning. While by no means exhaustive, some core impacts are captured below:

- Disrupted progressions of instruction when shifting from in-person to at-home learning both for short and extended periods of time.
- Limited ability for teachers to gather a robust body of evidence of student learning to assess achievement of outcomes.
- Inconsistent environments and access to learning based on individual student and family circumstances.
- Decrease in time spent on instruction as a result of additional health measures requiring cleaning and sanitization.

While classrooms always reflect a range of student needs, the pandemic has resulted in students demonstrating an even wider diversity in achievement levels, and this variance of achievement of foundational outcomes will require careful attention.

For teachers to effectively address next steps in instruction in response to the global impact, it is important that where possible, stability within the instructional environment is supported. Introducing new curricular outcomes across all subject areas does not account for the significant impact of pandemic learning disruptions as well as the inherent gaps that will be created for students due to shifting outcomes and content in the draft curriculum.

Implementation

Given the context summarized above, and the requirements for significant changes to the draft curriculum, it is critical that implementation planning be based on a defined scope and sequence for each subject, mapping out differences and shifts when compared to current curriculum. This foundational planning document will guide school authorities in providing supports through professional learning and resources to account for shifts. Additionally, this scope and sequence will support a manageable plan for phased implementation.

Resources

- **Provincial Digital Licensing**

Province-wide digital licensing to foundational resources will be central to supporting equity and access to robust resources linked to curricular outcomes. Resources should be both aligned to curriculum and reflective of Alberta Education documentation. This ensures adequate funding for provincial licensing agreements or additional funding for the purchase of print resources as appropriate.

- **Centralized Resource Repository**

A vetted and robust centralized resource repository of foundational resources allows school authorities to utilize these as a base and build out as needed given local context and expertise. Alberta Education should host and curate a provincial repository of resources including a process that allows for resources to be piloted, confirmed, and recommended by teachers to aid in resource selection in the future. A collaborative effort by school authorities, with the support of Alberta Education to acquire and develop learning and teaching resources will continue to enhance this work and includes financial, human, and print/digital support.

- **Funding for release time and additional supports**

The provision of funding to support additional release time for teachers throughout the school year, along with funding for centralized positions, will be required to further support and liaise with Alberta Education staff and classroom teachers during the initial implementation periods.

- **Access to reference lists utilized in development of curriculum**

Although references are not always included in curriculum documents, there is historical precedent of this in Alberta (current Mathematics Programs of Study) and other jurisdictions (Saskatchewan Mathematics Curriculum). This provides teachers with appropriate resources for further information.



Provincial Assessment Implications

Implementation planning requires careful consideration of provincial assessment implications. There are key actions that will require further planning and communication with respect to provincial assessments.

- **Phased assessment development**

In the current drafts, many concepts have shifted down in grades (i.e., fraction operations in mathematics). Due to concepts shifting down, concept development and full concept achievement may be compromised for the first few years of implementation. The background knowledge required to support student understanding will take time to progress through the grades.

Some subjects spiral, with concepts being built over time. Therefore, implementation across all grades will create immediate gaps in understanding and require time (2-3 years) for students to have sufficient exposure, experience and practice with concepts to be successful across all grades, specifically in Division II. Example: In order for Grade 6 students to be able to divide fractions, the pre-requisite knowledge covered in Grades 3, 4, 5 is necessary for Grade 6 students to achieve success with that outcome.

To that end, test design should account for this progression and development with the phasing in of testing of concepts or outcomes that may be developed over multiple grades. Provincial identification of these concepts, subjects and grade levels that require this consideration should be prepared and shared with all jurisdictions.

- **Account for transitions**

As implementation becomes mandatory, students who are transitioning from Grade 6 to junior high are specifically affected. For example, certain concepts in the draft curriculum will be compromised for the Grade 6 student moving to junior high as they have shifted from Grade 6 to Grade 4 and 5. These concepts will be important for success in Grades 7 to 9. Teaching “shifted concepts” in addition to the new curriculum will impact how much content is achievable in Grade 6. The deployment of new provincial assessment needs to account for required transitions.

- **Quest A+**

This solution needs to be a viable solution for the entire province to allow for online test writing. The system must be able to manage demand and should not create additional pressures for system use beyond planning for technology to be available for student use.

- **Collaboration and coordination across Ministry departments**

Because concepts in many curricula build from one year to the next, timing of implementation, consideration of a partial implementation, and provincial assessment must be aligned. It will be important to recognize that other assurance measures will be impacted by the implementation of a new curriculum and fluctuations and survey responses should be anticipated and articulated at a provincial level.

Coordinated collaboration is required between the assessment department and the curriculum department to ensure general information bulletins for PATs account for implementation planning.

- **Communication and Use**

It will be important to provide school boards with clarity regarding Ministry communication plans and plans for use of PAT results internally and publicly.

Conclusion

We want our schools to deliver a curriculum that supports the CBE's mission of success for all students. We are confident that if the government incorporates the feedback gathered and takes the time required to implement the K-6 curriculum, the outcome will be a curriculum of which we can all be proud.