

EXTRA! EXTRA! CURRICULUM SPECIAL



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This is a great new curriculum...



...for the 1950s

INSIDE:
the regular ATA News



Alberta's Teachers do not have confidence in the content and design of the Draft K-6 Curriculum.

The curriculum consultation and development processes used after the suspension of a partnership agreement with the Alberta Teachers' Association have been deeply flawed and have lacked transparency.

The ATA supports key elements of *The Guiding Framework for the Design and Development of Kindergarten to Grade 12 Provincial Curriculum* published by Alberta Education in December 2020, but this curriculum fails to meet the criteria set out in the government's own framework. We expect that any programs of study proposed for adoption will meet the

criteria previously determined by government. We support the decision of school boards to not pilot this draft curriculum and, furthermore, we call on all school authorities to refrain from participating in or directing their teachers to participate in the curriculum pilot.

Teachers who believe this curriculum is unsound and potentially damaging to student learning have the professional responsibility and moral right to refuse to participate in voluntary piloting. The government and school boards must respect the decision of individual teachers to not participate in piloting.

Given the extensive concerns identified by many, the ATA is calling on the Government of Alberta to immediately stop work on the piloting and implementation of the Draft K-6 Curriculum until an independent, full and open review and rewrite can occur.

The independent review must meaningfully involve a broad cross-section of certificated Alberta teachers and faculty members from Alberta faculties of education and must be properly inclusive of francophone, First Nations, Métis and Inuit perspectives.

Before piloting is to resume, rewritten curriculum must be developmentally, structurally and pedagogically sound, and should enjoy the broad support of Albertans.

Alberta's students and teachers require an appropriate, inclusive and workable curriculum. We are committed to supporting the development of such, and the ATA is prepared to work constructively in partnership with the Government of Alberta toward that end.

We just need to be invited.

Pledge your support for a rewrite at curriculum.thelearningteam.ca



The Alberta Teachers' Association

TONY VANDENBERG

ATA ads calling for a moratorium on curriculum implementation appeared in newspapers throughout the province starting on April 16.

Teachers call for stop to curriculum implementation

The Alberta Teachers' Association is calling for the Government of Alberta to stop all work on the piloting and implementation of the draft curriculum until an independent, open and full review and rewrite can occur.

The Association has published full-page ads in daily newspapers across Alberta to issue the call for a moratorium and to show support for school boards and teachers that decide not to participate in piloting.

"Alberta's students and teachers require an appropriate and workable curriculum," says Jason Schilling, president of the ATA. "The government is being told loudly and clearly that this curriculum is unacceptable. We now need the government to announce a stop to their implementation plans and to spell out a new way forward."

Schilling also says the Association supports school boards that have decided not to pilot this draft curriculum, and he calls on all school authorities to

refrain from directing their teachers to participate in piloting.

"Teachers who believe this curriculum is unsound and potentially damaging to student learning have the professional responsibility and moral right to refuse to participate in voluntary piloting. The government and school boards must respect the decision of individual teachers to not participate in piloting."

Although the teaching profession is frustrated by being left out of the curriculum development process, Schilling says teachers are more than willing to assist the government with a rewrite that reflects their extensive expertise and knowledge.

"We are committed to supporting the development of a high-quality curriculum, and the ATA is prepared to work constructively in partnership with the Government of Alberta toward that end," he says. It is the only workable path forward. We just need to be invited." ■

Teachers identify fatal flaws in draft curriculum

Preliminary results from an extensive survey on the draft curriculum show that 91 per cent of teachers are unhappy with the draft, including three in four teachers stating they are "very unhappy."

"We wanted to give teachers time to review the documents and provide their feedback to us since the government failed to engage teachers in the curriculum process," says Jason Schilling, president of the ATA. "But the preliminary data is overwhelming: this draft curriculum is fatally flawed."

"Teachers are the experts. Teachers know what will work in a classroom and what will not, and they are overwhelmingly telling us that this curriculum won't work for Alberta's elementary students."

Over 3,500 teachers, including school and central office leaders, completed the survey between March 29 and April 7, 2021. The respondents make up a highly representative sample of the Alberta elementary teaching population.

Schilling says that teachers' analysis included assessing the curriculum in terms of the government's own preset measures for success, including whether it was logical and developmentally

appropriate and reflected diverse perspectives, lifestyles and beliefs.

"It is clear that the problem with this curriculum is that teachers were not sufficiently engaged in its development and their concerns were not addressed," says Schilling. "The feedback shows that the government has failed its own mission. If the government is serious about producing a strong curriculum, it needs to listen to what teachers are telling them."

The project features an online questionnaire open to all teachers and principals in Alberta's public education system, including hundreds of elementary subject and grade-level specialists. A number of round-table discussions with subject-matter and curriculum development experts will follow in late spring.

Schilling says the ATA will provide updates and a final report to the government and the public throughout the process. The Association is prepared to make a positive contribution to addressing the curriculum's flaws in an effort to develop a curriculum that is appropriate and coherent and enjoys broad public support among Albertans. ■



Teachers' curriculum feedback thoughtful and professional

Recently, I was invited to moderate the Last Lecture put on by the University of Lethbridge. The structure of the event was simple: one short lecture by professors for the graduating students as they begin their own "unexpected journeys," which was the theme of the day's lecture.

We can all attest that this last year has been one unexpected journey. As I listened to the range of lectures, a comment that stood out to me came from Dr. Katharina Stevens, an assistant professor in the U of L's department of philosophy.

Stevens spoke about change, and how too much change at once can be traumatic. This started me thinking about the dramatic changes we have all experienced over the last year of the pandemic. It's a lot of change at once and it can impact our mental health, and as Stevens noted, it's important to access mental health supports when this change is overwhelming.

Stevens further explained that when we know the very core of who we are, such as our values and our beliefs, it lessens the impact of the changes that happen to us. Of course, as I listened to this, I thought of my own immediate professional and personal life, but the

comment stuck with me throughout the week. Then, as the ATA released its stance of non-confidence in the draft K-6 curriculum, I began to apply Stevens's comments about change to the draft curriculum and the reaction to it from thousands of Albertans.

Essentially, the change to the curriculum in its content and design are misaligned with the core beliefs and values of Albertans. This has been highlighted explicitly by the thousands of teachers who have taken time to complete the ATA's survey. The feedback that teachers have provided is detailed, thoughtful and professional, and it speaks to the heart and core of our work.

Teachers care about their students and their future. Teachers want to see a change to the curriculum — some parts of the program of studies are decades old. However, the draft K-6 curriculum needs to be reviewed by Alberta teachers and members from Alberta faculties of education and must be properly inclusive of multiple perspectives, such as francophone, Black, Indigenous and people of colour.

Teachers believe in the future of our students. It provides hope, and that speaks to the very core of our work. ■

I welcome your comments. Contact me at jason.schilling@ata.ab.ca.

SURVEY RESULTS

Teacher feedback on the draft curriculum

91%

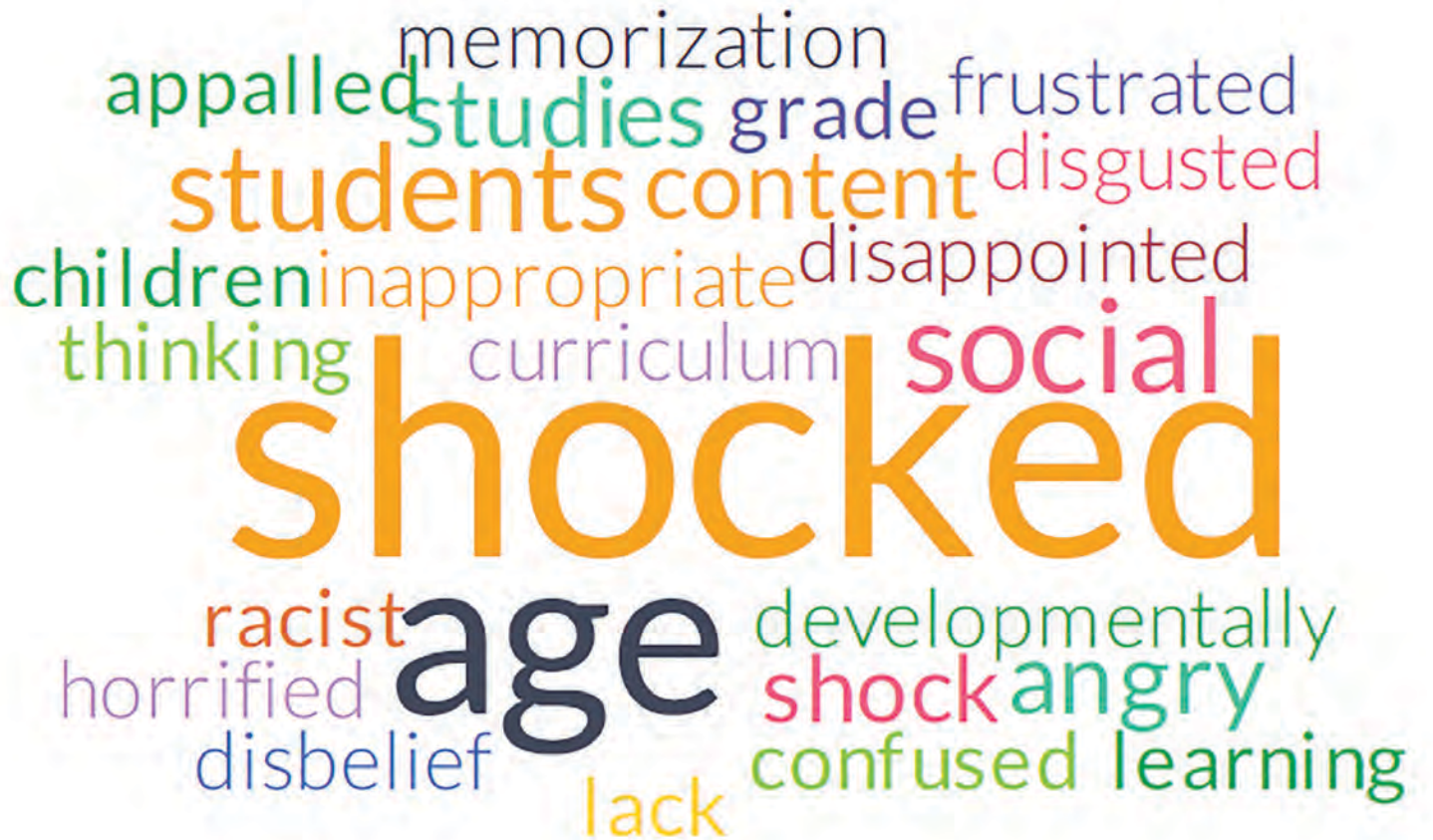
are unhappy with the new K–6 draft curriculum.

91%

of teachers are uncomfortable moving ahead into the future to teach the new K–6 curriculum.

93%

of school leaders and central office leaders are uncomfortable moving ahead into the future to support this new K–6 curriculum in their school and/or school community.



In teachers' own words:

"This is such a huge step back for education in Alberta. We're being asked to teach developmentally inappropriate curriculum and it goes against my professional judgment."

"I cannot in good conscience teach a curriculum (and invest in creating materials and resources) that is flawed at its very core. I would rather quit teaching than expose my students to this curriculum."

"I don't see any current educational research in this curriculum. Educators were clearly not at the forefront of the development process, and the language and some content is inappropriate at best and racist and offensive at worst."

Key areas of concern for certificated Alberta teachers, school leaders and central office leaders:

89%

disagree that the draft curriculum has age-appropriate content that is logically sequenced within each grade and from grade to grade

94%

disagree that the draft curriculum is developmentally appropriate with high academic standards

93%

disagree that the draft curriculum is inclusive of opportunities for all students to reach their personal best

87%

disagree that the draft curriculum is scientifically rigorous while respecting a variety of beliefs

What are people saying about the draft curriculum?



The Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services (iSMSS) stands with the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) and its call for a halt on the implementation of the proposed K to 6 Alberta curriculum. As an institute grounded in research, we echo the concerns addressed by nearly 30 school boards across Alberta regarding the content and the development process of this curriculum. We also join the list of equity-seeking groups who do not see themselves adequately or accurately reflected in this proposed curriculum.



Dr. Glynnis Lieb, Executive Director of iSMSS [via Twitter, @iSMSS_Ualberta, April 21, 2021]



For there to be true inclusivity in the curriculum, representation from many voices must exist at every level of the curriculum-making process and that includes Métis voices... Our citizens were shocked, and we are disheartened, to see our input and collaboration reduced to nothing more than a side-note in the draft that was presented to the public. ...The tone of the curriculum carries a Eurocentric-American point of view that effectively eliminates the voice and history of the Métis Peoples in Alberta.



Audrey Poitras, President, Métis Nation of Alberta [via Global News, March 31, 2021]



Comme la communauté francophone, le CSNO déplore le manque de perspectives francophones dans le curriculum. Le CSNO croit que le nouveau curriculum ne respecte pas l'arrêté ministériel sur l'apprentissage des élèves, notamment en ce qui concerne la perspective et l'histoire francophones, surtout dans les programmes de Français et d'Études sociales, car celui-ci n'est pas à la hauteur de cet énoncé de l'arrêté: « Tous les élèves, ainsi que leurs familles et leurs communautés, se verront dans le curriculum, avec des occasions dans le curriculum, réservées à l'étude des traditions, de l'histoire et de la géographie locales, y compris l'histoire francophone de l'Alberta ».



Conseil scolaire du Nord-Ouest, News release, April 13, 2021



The proposed curriculum is grounded in a flawed assumption that before students can engage in critical and creative thinking, they must first accrue a massive body of knowledge. Knowledge is, of course, important. However, learning hundreds of discrete facts disconnected from larger ideas makes it extremely difficult for students to make meaningful connections to their own lives and to broader understandings of concepts such as democracy, human rights, and social cohesion – ideas that help us live well together.



Cory Wright-Maley (St. Mary's University), Carla Peck (University of Alberta), David Scott (University of Calgary), and Amy von Heyking (University of Lethbridge) on behalf of social studies professors from across Alberta. [Edmonton Journal, April 6, 2021]



An overly political remaking of Alberta's now-strong school system is galvanizing parent groups who are against the changes. A big fight over the base curriculum for the youngest kids is not only bad for the province, it could make potential newcomers – and even the companies and investors Mr. Kenney's government has spent two years trying to entice – less enthusiastic about coming to the province.

Politics will be part of any new curriculum. But Mr. Kenney's UCP is, as often, in danger of letting politics take over.



Kelly Cryderman, The Globe and Mail, April 3, 2021

What can you do to speak out on the curriculum?

Teachers from across the province have spoken out to say they are concerned about the draft K-6 curriculum. However, how can we turn our words into action? Here's a few things you can do to help fight the curriculum.

1

Respond to the government survey.

The draft curriculum was developed without consulting those who bring it to life in the classroom: teachers.

Developing curriculum without the feedback of teachers will set students up for failure. Every teacher, regardless of current grade level assignment, has interest in the learning outcomes used in elementary schools. We must make sure all teachers are heard before implementation.

Review the relevant draft documents at <http://new.learnalberta.ca> and respond to the government survey by clicking the "Provide Feedback" link at the top of the homepage.

2

Complete the ATA questionnaire.

We want to hear from you! Teachers do not have confidence in the curriculum process, so the ATA is collecting independent feedback.

Tell us what you think of the draft curriculum. We will be collecting your feedback and providing it to the public and the Government of Alberta.

You can fill out the survey here: <https://surveys.teachers.ab.ca/s3/curriculumreview>.

3

Share news articles and social media posts with your colleagues, friends and family.

The more Albertans who are concerned about the curriculum, the more pressure the government will feel to address our issues. We need to make sure Albertans know how problematic this draft curriculum could be for students, teachers and schools! The easiest way to do that is to share content like news articles and social media posts with your colleagues, family and friends.

You'll find a lot of this content on our social media pages at twitter.com/albertateachers and facebook.com/ABTeachers.

4

Share the curriculum. thelearningteam.ca.

We are calling on the government to stop work on curriculum piloting and implementation until an independent, full and open review and rewrite can occur. We're asking parents and members of the public who are concerned about the draft curriculum to pledge their support for a review and rewrite by visiting curriculum.thelearningteam.ca.

5

Call your MLA.

Your local MLA works for you! Regardless of what party they represent, call or email them and let them know your concerns.

And if you email them, please copy us by including government@ata.ab.ca on your emails – we are keeping track!



The Alberta Teachers' Association