

GYPSD teachers were provided a curriculum survey in May 2021 to provide their feedback using evidence from the Draft K-6 Curriculum documents. The GYPSD Curriculum Working Group (CWG) compiled the GYPSD Teacher Feedback, conducted a group evaluation of the draft documents, and completed a research review.

GYPSD Teacher Feedback

The themes and significant issues listed below were identified in the May 13, 2021, Grande Yellowhead Public School Division Draft Curriculum Teacher Survey. The key issues are not listed in order of priority:

- Draft K-6 Curriculum is subject centered, not learner-centered
- Content is non inclusive and contain many examples of “Othering”:
 - lack of meaningful engagement and modern perspectives on women, Indigenous peoples, Francophone, BIPOC, and 2SLGBTBQ+ communities
 - examples of major contributions are attributed to colonial influences and Caucasian cisgender males
- Religion doctrine should not be taught in secular public schools
- Most of the content is *antiquated*
- Relevancy for today’s culture:
 - curriculum reinforces past pedagogical practices rather than current research-based best practices
 - does not support the diverse culture found within Alberta
 - should be used as a starting point for unity rather than disparity
- The draft curriculum prescribes pedagogy (the teacher’s approach to instruction); the purpose of a curriculum document is not to prescribe pedagogy
- Lack of balance:
 - effective instructional practice requires balance between:
 - the *science of* and the *art of* teaching these subject areas
 - low-level learning and deep conceptual learning
 - disciplinary and interdisciplinary work
 - formative, and summative assessment opportunities
 - realistic number of learning outcomes
 - literature from the past, present, and future
 - Eurocentric ideology must stand alongside other ideologies to show respect for the various people in our province
- Incohesive outcomes:
 - requires a scope and sequence (foundations for future grades) and a detailed front matter for the various curricula for teachers to effectively teach students to see that the subjects relate to one another
 - themes and responses are not listed in order of priority
- Heavy content at low depth of knowledge:

- “A co-worker said to me ‘we will be teaching kids to compete with Google.’ I cannot shake that... How true! Rote memorization... low level thinking.” (GYPSD teacher, 2021)
- not developmentally appropriate for learners
- contradicts Alberta’s Teacher Quality Standard (TQS)

Common Research Conclusions

The conclusions are not listed in order of priority:

- social studies’ outcomes are not developmental, and do not lead students to be prepared to participate in society
- front matter for subjects is missing or incomplete
- outcomes surrounding Indigenous culture are presented as in the past - no present time included, and appear to be an afterthought
- racism/marginalization/othering is a common motif
- lack of variety of cultures
- curriculum limits teacher flexibility for instruction (which impacts assessment) because of how prescribed the outcomes are – directs teachers practice instead of letting them make those decisions with the students they have in front of them
- inappropriate placement of concepts for the age of students
- learning through play is missing
- limited acknowledgement of Francophone people and their contributions both in the past and the present
- too many outcomes to cover in a significant way to ensure deep learning
- too much content in all levels - not enough time to build significant understanding
- depth of knowledge is often too deep in the early years
- strong bias towards northern European, Christian perspectives in social studies
- does not meet the standards of a legally mandated Alberta Program of Studies
- no alignment with Alberta Education's Literacy or Numeracy Progressions
- Indigenous Elders, traditional Knowledge Keepers and educators were not consulted or included in the draft writing process nor was the draft based on the Alberta Education First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework
- lacking (or is devoid of) efficacy (effectiveness) in its entirety
- educators and leaders are "very uncomfortable" with moving ahead with the draft curriculum [there are indicators that changes to the draft are planned, but there is no timeline or focus that has been communicated]
- current draft curriculum is deemed unacceptable - ranging from *entirely unsalvageable* to parts of the draft that *may have efficacy*;
- social studies requires a complete rewrite by including certificated current Alberta teachers

- does not provide for engagement with previous knowledge, contemporary cultural ways of knowing, much meaningful content that extends learning beyond rote memorization and fact-finding
- inconsistent with legal frameworks (Human Rights, Multicultural Act, Guiding Framework, Ministerial Order on Student Learning)
- financial literacy content is not culturally appropriate or sensitive to families
- lack of BIPOC examples
- potentially harmful to students:
 - exposure of personal finance, othering, food/body shaming

Additional Interpretations

The additional interpretations are not listed in priority:

- curriculum work was behind closed doors, lacked transparency
- writing process not reflected in the Language Arts curriculum
- lack of conceptual understanding in math curriculum
- alignment missing between math and science
- American content included in the draft curriculum rather than Canadian and Albertan
- passive language in outcomes
- curriculum is focused on 'what' instead of 'why' or 'how'
- PE and Wellness needs a reset to align with development
- a music specialist is needed and requires access to musical instruments
- excludes different styles of music
- immense work for teachers without resources
- outcomes do not describe what students know and are able to do
- lack of a rich variety of ideas and viewpoints
- lack of language of the disciplines and educational terminology needed to communicate with certified educational professionals
- lack of STEM, digital literacy, coding, etc. required in the 21-century classroom

Identified Missing Elements in the Research

During the review of the research, the GYPSD Curriculum Working Group identified questions/considerations that were not specifically addressed in the reviewed research.

The elements are not listed in order of priority:

- feedback from those who are currently piloting the draft curriculum is not available; how and when will piloting experiences be reported to school authorities and the public?
- when will teachers see the resources and materials to support the implementation of this draft?

- implications for learning-diverse students
- COVID implications on students' learning
- effects of omitting global connections and current affairs
- transparent, comprehensive timeline and process for the government development and reviews of the current draft curriculum
- parental feedback
- implementing the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* for Education (Calls 6 - 12):
 - there is no evidence that this curriculum moves in that direction. Dr. Dwayne Donald has stated that knowledge is sacred; our new curriculum is viewed by Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keeper as a sacred document
 - Calls 6-12 need to be *embedded* in the document

Research reviewed by the GYPSD CWG included:

- the Alberta Teachers' Association Professional Curriculum Analysis and Critique of Alberta Education's 2021 Draft K - 6 Curriculum (2021)
- the Black Gold School Division Draft Curriculum Review (2021)
- Dr. Carla Peck, Professor of Social Studies Education in the Department of Elementary Education at the University of Alberta