

SOCIAL STUDIES K–6 DRAFT CURRICULUM—DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS

RESPONSE CONTEXT

On 2024 03 14, Alberta Education released a draft K–12 Social Studies Subject Overview (Subject Overview) together with a draft K–6 Social Studies curriculum (Curriculum). These drafts were released in conjunction with a public engagement survey with the intent to seek feedback on the draft curriculum and subject overview.

In addition to promoting the ministry’s public engagement survey regarding the draft K–12 Subject Overview and K–6 Curriculum, the Association collected feedback from teachers regarding these drafts. Data collected by the Association was drawn from almost 600 Alberta teachers, including data collected at Alberta Education teachers’ convention engagement sessions and from Association teacher focus groups. Focus groups convened by the Association included active K–6 social studies teachers, social studies curriculum specialists and consultants, administrators, and representatives from the Association’s Early Childhood Education and Social Studies specialist councils.

The feedback below is intended to represent prominent insights from teachers present at the feedback opportunities noted above. A more detailed analysis of the draft K–12 Subject Overview and a draft K–6 Curriculum is currently under development.

RECOMMENDATIONS: K–12 SOCIAL STUDIES SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND K–6 SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM

KEEP	REVISE	ADD	DELETE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understandings are developmentally appropriate and stated in a simplified format (compared to knowledge items included in many KUSPs that are overly specific and developmentally inappropriate). • Teachers are accustomed to the curriculum framework, so it makes sense to retain the OI-GQ-LO-KUSP organizational structure. • Retain the voice and choice curriculum wording provides teachers (ie, decisions made with “such as” and “for example” wording). • This curriculum is free of jargon and is understandable by parents and teachers. • This curriculum is focused on “what to teach” (content) and is not focused on “how to teach” (pedagogy). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjust the ratio of knowledge, understandings, skills and procedures across KUSPs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Currently, the curriculum includes a significant number of knowledge items included in learning outcome KUSPs. ○ Reduce the number of KUSP knowledge items to emphasize skill development. ○ Taken together with the reduced number of KUSP knowledge items, ensure that any adjustments to the wording of learning outcomes, understandings, skills and procedures can be implemented in one school year in a complex classroom environment. • Reduce the number of knowledge-based topics and outcomes across all grades so that teachers have time to focus on skill development and deep learning. • Use Bloom’s Taxonomy to strengthen the verbs included in outcomes and include higher order thinking skills. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Revise learning outcomes that include the word “explore” to clarify the level of thinking that is expected for students to engage with and for teachers to assess. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add dedicated learning outcomes in each grade level that explicitly address the development of discipline-specific social and emotional skills, Dimensions of Thinking used in current programs of study and the competency progressions from the new curriculum. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensure learning outcomes purposefully progress and build upon one another in each grade level. ○ Examples of discipline-embedded social and emotional skills include cooperation, collaboration, consensus-building, conflict resolution, discussion skills, debate skills and active listening skills. ○ The Dimensions of Thinking employed in current curriculum is highly regarded by teachers. It is recommended that these are purposefully incorporated into dedicated and explicit learning outcomes. ○ The competency progressions offer a developmentally appropriate progression of skills that are relevant to curriculum and could be woven into dedicated learning outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kindergarten—Remove “Share experiences with reference to time (recently, long ago, yearly).” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Kindergarten students are in the pre-operational stage of development and, as a result, are unable to comprehend the concept of time in these terms. ○ Asking students to discuss the interpretation of histories with reference to time should be removed, as these are theoretical concepts more appropriate for older students. • Grade 5 concepts about historical civilizations will be difficult for students of this age to grasp.



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<p>PROMISING PRACTICES TO INCLUDE IN ALL GRADE LEVELS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade 2—Includes skill-based learning outcomes such as “How can people contribute to discussions?” and “How can people resolve issues?” Retain these skill-based learning outcomes and include a developmentally appropriate progression of these outcomes in every grade level. • Grade 3—Teachers note that this curriculum includes flexibility for teachers to choose resources, information and connections relevant to their classroom and school community. • Grade 5—Includes skills and processes from the social sciences that are used to frame the exploration of ancient civilizations. It is recommended to include a similar approach across all grade levels to contextualize learning within social studies disciplines and allow student opportunity to learn the habits of mind and skills of each discipline. • Grade 6—Includes a skill-based learning outcome focused on project planning skills. This learning outcome is practical, relevant and encourages cross-curricular learning opportunities. Retain this skill-based outcome and include a developmentally appropriate progression of skill-based outcomes in every grade level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When revising the verbiage of learning outcomes, the content load of KUSPs must be reduced to ensure there is time to complete the curriculum with depth of learning. ○ Revise curriculum to include more verbs focused on the “doing” and “demonstrating” of learning rather than just thinking about and discussing learning. • With so few learning outcomes, reporting on a single outcome is problematic for assessment, especially when “exploration” is the basis of the learning outcome. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It is difficult to assess “exploration.” Revise these verbs to clarify the expectation for learning. ○ Focus on revising learning outcome verbs (rather than increasing the number of learning outcomes) to make assessment goals clear. • Revise and enhance skill-based outcomes and KUSP skill items to ensure that they (1) build on one another and (2) progress logically from grade-to-grade toward a clear goal for student learning. • Revise “bands” of outcomes so that there is a logical, connected progression from one grade to the next. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Revise “bands” to ensure that concepts are revisited and extended as curriculum progresses through the grades (ie, a spiral curriculum approach). • Revise organizing idea and learning outcome wording to focus on the “end goal” of learning (ie, begin with the end in mind). For example, “In this learning outcome, students will develop....” • Revise Indigenous and francophone curriculum inclusions so that they (1) build on one another and (2) progress logically from grade to grade toward a clear goal for student learning. • Revise surface-level inclusion of francophone perspectives that are situated within time and place (as historical perspectives) to include references to contemporary perspectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A logical developmental progression of discipline-specific social and emotional skills and Dimensions of Thinking within curriculum will create a unifying band of outcomes that allow curriculum to feel like a purposeful and consistent developmental progression. ○ This logical developmental progression will also create a bridge between grade levels to support teachers in planning for multigrade classrooms. • Add explicit reference to competencies (eg, critical thinking) under KUSP skills and procedures. • Add explicit reference to Dimensions of Thinking under KUSP skills and procedures. • Add explicit discipline-specific literacy and numeracy skills in KUSPs that progress logically from grade to grade. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ While the ministerial order emphasizes literacy and numeracy across curriculum, teachers do not see these concepts present in the knowledge-focused social studies curriculum. ○ For example, identifying developmentally appropriate text schema (ie, cause/effect, chronology, case study, persuasion) in social studies writing and applying specific text schema in students’ own social studies writing are literacy strategies that function as universal supports for students, including newcomers and students learning English as an additional language. ○ A logical developmental progression of disciplinary literacy and numeracy skills within curriculum will create a unifying band of outcomes that allow curriculum to feel like a purposeful developmental progression. • Add discipline-specific, developmentally appropriate oral communication skills in each grade level. 	



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The K–6 curriculum needs to be revised so that it aims to help students understand francophone perspectives as they progress through the grades. ● When wording includes “such as” with respect to First Nations, Métis, Inuit and francophone, the “such as” makes it a choice to include multiple perspectives, which may be problematic. ● Review KUSPs to examine how many references to First Nations, Métis and Inuit are in relation to time and place, rather than in context. Indigenous peoples are generally referenced through a historic (rather than contemporary) lens in this curriculum. ● Enhance emphasis on current events at all grade levels. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Create a dedicated learning outcome focused on current events, with a relevant KUSP, in the Citizenship band of each grade level. ○ The current events learning outcomes should (1) build on one another and (2) progress logically from grade to grade toward a clear goal for student learning. ○ KUSPs should include relevant discipline-specific skills and avoid approaches that are more tailored to English language arts and literature (ie, avoid 5WH approach for reading current event articles). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For example, students may read and write current events articles using a variety of text schema (ie, chronology, cause and effect, compare and contrast). ● Enhance emphasis on opportunities for students to relate their contemporary life to historical events. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Revise wording in learning outcomes to ask students to compare (rather than explore) communities with their own lived experience in order to make connections. ● Teachers note that skills included in the curriculum do not purposefully reflect the disciplinary skills of social studies. Revise skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For example, debate skills occur in Grade 6; however, there are no communication skills built in to scaffold successful debate skills in previous grades. ● Add specific geographic skills (ie, drawing conclusions about maps) beyond just reading maps. ● Add research skill outcomes in each grade level that develop progressively throughout the curriculum. ● Add developmentally appropriate digital and media literacy skills in the Citizenship strand of all grades. ● Include understandings related to contributing to “the common good” as part of citizenship-related learning outcomes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Although the ministerial order refers to “the common good,” there is no reference to this concept in curriculum. ● Add cross-disciplinary connections in the New LearnAlberta ecosystem where cross-disciplinary skills covered in other subjects are applicable to a social studies KUSP. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For example, research skills covered in the English language arts and literature curriculum are directly applicable in a social studies context. ○ Including a feature that links KUSPs to cross-disciplinary skills in other subjects would support multisubject and multigrade teachers in efficient planning for instruction. ● Within the Citizenship band, add a dedicated learning outcome, with developmentally appropriate KUSP progression, of current events analysis skills. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ As an entry point for all students into the curriculum, including students who are newcomers and those learning English as an additional language, current events allow students to connect social studies to matters of personal, global and contemporary relevance. 	



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	<p>included in KUSPs to reflect the Dimensions of Thinking included in current programs of study and the competency progressions included in new curriculum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ One teacher stated that, “The knowledge is there, but the ‘doing’ of social studies is not there.” ● Add the role of inquiry, research, collaboration and communication clearly in each grade. These are the social studies skills that should be built progressively throughout the grades and through a crosscurricular approach. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Research skills included in English language arts and literature are sequential and robust, which is encouraging. However, there needs to be purposeful crosscurricular links to these skills in social studies. ○ The research skills in social studies are more of a “collect, share and discuss” focus, which is a reductive approach that would be enhanced by connections to other subjects. ○ Reference to relevant skills in other subject areas can be included in social studies KUSPs via New LearnAlberta (eg, research skills in English language arts and literature). ○ Crosscurricular links to financial literacy skills in the Systems component of the social studies curriculum would also be a logical connection to include. ● Revise the curriculum outcomes to ensure that all students, including newcomers and students learning English as an additional language, can find entry points into curriculum. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Grade 5—There are few opportunities to connect to students’ contemporary lives. ● The curriculum should demonstrate a respect for the beliefs of other groups. It should also include the learning of other traditions in addition to “God Save the King,” “O Canada” and displaying the Canadian flag. Include the treaty flags, the Métis flag, and reference religions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Add a developmentally appropriate progression of residential schools and treaty education in each grade level. ● Add learning outcomes regarding the changing relationship between Métis people and the government. ● Add opportunities for students to learn about themselves, their families and their communities before shifting to government-related concepts (ie, taxes). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Grade 1 students discuss roles/responsibilities of group members; whereas in Grade 2, they discuss governmental roles. This progression is developmentally inappropriate and confusing for students. ● Add consistent inclusion of the Métis perspective in learning outcomes. There is an arbitrary exclusion of the Métis people in several learning outcomes where First Nations and Inuit are referenced. ● Add opportunities to connect learning to students’ own lived experiences in the Identity and Citizenship strands. ● Add reference to contemporary francophone and bilingual community life. ● Add opportunities to talk about francophone month; the francophone flag for Alberta; to connect to current events related to francophone community. ● Kindergarten—Add reference to francophone perspectives. ● Kindergarten—Add the connections to the land that are present in our current curriculum. ● Grade 3—Time and Place: Locate a francophone community on a map of Alberta. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Add reference to bilingual communities to this outcome. 	



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	<p>that do not recognize flags or symbols, such as Jehovah’s Witnesses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade 5—Asks students to explore through artifacts, but they are studying places so far away, it may be impossible for teachers to find these artifacts. • Kindergarten— Learning outcomes focused on wants are based on a multiplicity of factors outside of students’ control. These references may be unintentionally marginalizing for students with a variety of intersecting identity factors. <p>DEVELOPMENTALLY INAPPROPRIATE, INACCURATE and OMITTED COMPONENTS FOR REVISION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kindergarten—Children do not have the life experience or developmental ability to ask questions that have meaning for others. Adjust expectations of this learning outcome to focus more generally on asking questions. • Kindergarten—Learning Outcome: Determine roles and expectations for group work. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This learning outcome requires a low-level skill for this age group; revise to focus on “demonstrating” roles and expectations for group work. • Kindergarten learning outcomes include many low-level verbs that ask for students to “think about” concepts rather than to do and demonstrate skills. • Grade 2 and Grade 3 concept progression is potentially disorienting for students. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Grade 2 is a surface-level federal focus, whereas Grade 3 is an in-depth exploration of regions in Alberta. This conceptual progression may feel confusing for students; recommend reversing the order of these programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade 6—Add reference to local levels of government to ensure students connect to a local context before progressing to other levels of government. 	



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The horizontal alignment of several grade levels is disjointed and requires revision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Grade 4: Systems ○ Grade 5 ○ Grade 6: Alignment is disjointed because the local level of government is not included in this grade level. • Terminology inaccuracies are present regarding the Appalachian region and reference to the Appalachian Mountains. • Add francophone-centered KUSPs in all grades, as references currently appear in Grades 1 and 3. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Add reference to the bilingual version of “O Canada.” • Grade 5—Learning outcome focused on researching an authoritarian leader. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This is a problematic learning outcome because students who research this topic may learn developmentally inappropriate information through internet research processes. ○ Revise this outcome to clarify learning expectations and goals. <p>RECOMMENDED REVISIONS TO INACCURATE, DEVELOPMENTALLY INAPPROPRIATE and OMITTED CONTENT INFORMED BY TRC CALLS TO ACTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add age-appropriate references at all grade levels to residential schools and treaties that build from the child to their home, community and beyond. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Saskatchewan (Office of the Treaty Commissioner; K–12 Treaty Education resources) is an effective example to follow regarding developmentally appropriate learning outcomes. ○ Grade 3: Missionaries provided services. This learning outcome shows one perspective (that colonialism is positive) and neglects to acknowledge that there were societies and systems that existed prior to colonization. 		



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colonization is framed as benefitting European countries and colonists, representing one perspective on colonialism. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For example, students are asked to examine anglophone and francophone perspectives on colonization, but this outcome does not reference Indigenous perspectives on colonization. • Revise learning outcomes to address the arbitrary exclusion of the Métis people in several learning outcomes. First Nations and Inuit are referenced, but the Métis are excluded from outcomes relevant to the Métis community. • Revise learning outcomes to build student understanding regarding the changing relationship between Métis people and the government. • Read Call to Action #62 and revisit the logic of how and when Indigenous content is included. • Inaccurate references: Treaties in Alberta. This statement is inaccurate because treaties transcend and predate provincial boundaries. • Inaccurate reference: Canada signed treaties • Inaccurate reference: Chiefs as levels of municipal government <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reference to <i>chief</i> as part of municipal government. Comparing <i>chief</i> to <i>mayor</i> undermines the sovereign nature of Indigenous communities. • Inaccurate reference: The term <i>chief</i> is used as a generic leadership term common to all First Nations. • Grade 4—Add opportunity to learn about what Canada was like before colonization. • Grade 5—There is mention of slavery, but no mention of residential schools. • Grade 6—Students learn about historical Indigenous governance rather than contemporary Indigenous governance. This learning positions Indigenous peoples as a historical construct rather than as contemporary communities. 		



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise wording that builds separation between Canada and Indigenous perspectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Example: Land is positioned as a resource to be exploited, which is a colonialist perspective. • Revise references to gender binary roles, as current references imply that all cultures subscribe to a gender binary. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Clarify that, prior to colonization and in contemporary society, many cultures have had roles for people who identify as nonbinary. • Revise superficial/trivial knowledge to clarify the intent of these outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Know the specific flags of four specific First Nations. ○ There are two specific Indigenous languages mentioned, but then students are asked to use maps to identify where diverse Indigenous languages are spoken. ○ Revise this outcome to encourage students to understand more about the context. It will be difficult to find a map that captures this information accurately and with appropriate context. 		

