



What Alberta's teachers believe about curriculum and curriculum reform

We believe that curriculum is about what should be learned

Currently, Alberta is engaged in a process that will identify what knowledge, skills and attitudes students will need to master to lead successful lives after they leave school. This is a complex process that ultimately will lead to the development of new programs of study setting out requirements in each subject area and grade level.

We believe that curriculum is *not* about how a particular curriculum outcome should be taught

Instruction is different from curriculum. Much of the current controversy dominating the headlines relates not to curriculum but instruction. Instruction, or how a curriculum outcome should be taught, is best left to the professional judgement of individual teachers who are best positioned to determine what strategies and approaches will work best for the students they teach. This will not be the same for every child or in every classroom or in every school or community.

We believe that curriculum belongs to and must be understood and supported by Albertans

Schools are at the heart of Alberta communities and we must strive to develop a consensus about what the broad outcomes of education should be. It is important that curriculum reform has social licence and that diverse views are heard, respected and, where appropriate, reflected. The best way of building support among Albertans is to engage them in a real, meaningful and ongoing dialogue about what they want their children to learn.

We believe that on matters of designing programs of study, teachers must take the leading role

As curriculum reform moves towards the design of programs of study, practical questions will emerge about sequencing, cross-subject integration, and the definition of specific learning objectives. Teachers possess relevant professional preparation and practical expertise to do this work and, ultimately, will have to implement the programs. It follows that they should play the leading role in this latter part of the process.

We believe that business has a legitimate contribution to make, but that curriculum must address much more than short-term economic objectives

Some efforts are being made to involve businesses in curriculum review. This is appropriate as clearly one of the objectives of education is to prepare students for the world of work. But this is not the sole objective—education is also about preparing students to live meaningful, healthy, active and engaged lives in a democratic society. Therefore, consultation should also involve a broad cross section of civil society including labour, arts, cultural, academic, ethnic and First Nations groups. Furthermore, corporations should not be allowed to influence curriculum reform in ways that would inappropriately advance their immediate commercial interests.

We believe that curriculum should allow room for inclusion, local innovation and adaptation

To provide teachers with opportunities to personalize instruction and further develop students' creativity, communication, collaboration and critical thinking, it is necessary for the curriculum to focus more deeply on a smaller number of curriculum objectives. Curriculum needs to emphasize problem solving, rather than just content, and provide room to introduce locally relevant learning outcomes. Facilitating the inclusion of students with exceptionalities should also be an objective of curriculum design.

We believe that technology is a tool that can be used to support instruction

Digital technology can be used by teachers and students to enhance learning, but the use of technology is ultimately a means to learning and should not be regarded as an end in itself. Technology is not a panacea, nor should technology and media be regarded as a substitute for real-life experience. As curriculum design evolves toward the development of programs of study, we must ensure that students and teachers have equitable access to appropriate technology but also guard against firms with a vested interest in selling technology exercising undue influence.

We believe that assessment and evaluation must be consistent with the curriculum

Evaluation and assessment, is first and foremost, the responsibility of the classroom teacher. It is an integral part of teaching and must directly reflect and reinforce student learning. Assessment and evaluation must engage a broad range of learning processes and skills as well as testing content. Standardized testing in particular should be limited and focused on providing information that can inform teaching practice.

We believe that curriculum implementation must be properly supported

Having a high quality curriculum is necessary but not sufficient to create a high performing education system that can help every child to achieve his or her full potential. It is as important to ensure that the learning and teaching are appropriately supported and resourced. New programs of study must be implemented in a structured process to insure that teachers have access to suitable learning resources, adequate preparation time and targeted professional development opportunities to support new approaches. Furthermore, rolling out changes in the programs of study must take place at a measured pace and only as the necessary supports are put into place.

We believe that it is the responsibility of teachers to lead students to mastery of the curriculum and it is the responsibility of government and school boards to support teachers in their efforts to do so.