



The Alberta Teachers' Association

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[via E-mail—education.minister@gov.ab.ca](mailto:education.minister@gov.ab.ca)

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

Dear Minister

I am writing to bring formally to your attention the following motions were unanimously adopted at the April 2021 meeting of the Provincial Executive Council of the Alberta Teachers' Association (Association) concerning the curriculum revision process employed under your mandate, and the product of that mandate released March 29, 2021:

- ...to express to the minister of education its lack of confidence in the content and design of the *Draft K–6 Curriculum*, as released on March 29, and the deeply flawed and opaque curriculum consultation and development processes implemented by the government after August 2019 that gave rise to the draft;
- ...to call upon the Government of Alberta to place a moratorium on the piloting and implementation of the *Draft K–6 Curriculum* until such time as the draft has been submitted to an independent, full and open review and rewriting process led by and involving a broad cross-section of certificated Alberta teachers and faculty members from Alberta postsecondary faculties and schools of education and is properly inclusive of Francophone, First Nations, Métis and Inuit perspectives; is developmentally, structurally and pedagogically sound; and enjoys the broad support of Albertans;
- ... to affirm the professional responsibility and moral right of teachers to refuse to participate in the voluntary piloting of the new *Draft K–6 Curriculum* should they believe that curriculum to be structurally and developmentally unsound and potentially damaging to student learning;

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- ...to affirm and support elements of *The Guiding Framework for the Design and Development of Kindergarten to Grade 12 Provincial Curriculum*, published by Alberta Education in December 2020, and expect that any programs of studies proposed for adoption will meet the minimal criteria set out therein; and,
- ...to call upon the minister of education to restore the partnership on curriculum development that was initiated in the 2016 Memorandum of Agreement between the Government of Alberta and the Association.

Parallel resolutions will be submitted to the Association's 2021 Annual Representative Assembly (ARA) in May for consideration by the 450 teacher delegates selected to represent their colleagues across the province. ARA will consider, also, the following additional resolution:

- ...that the Government of Alberta delegate responsibility for the development, renewal and revision of the K–12 programs of studies to an independent and apolitical provincial curriculum development authority supported by subject-based program managers from Alberta Education and consisting of subject-matter experts from Alberta's universities, representatives from the Alberta Teachers' Association, active teachers from the field, and representatives from the Alberta School Councils' Association, whose recommendations concerning the content, design and implementation of programs of study would be publicly disclosed at the time they are conveyed to the minister of education for potential implementation.

These resolutions reflect and respond to the overwhelming expression of concern that the Association has heard from our membership concerning the content and design of the *Draft K–6 Curriculum* over the last few weeks. As of the evening of April 22, responses to our survey of the opinion of 7,378 respondents, a number more than sufficient to ensure results are representative, indicated that:

- 91% are uncomfortable moving forward with the draft;
- 93% of school leaders are uncomfortable supporting this draft;
- 95% disagree that the curriculum is age appropriate and logically sequenced from grade to grade;
- 94% disagree that the curriculum is developmentally appropriate with high academic standards; and,
- 93% disagree that the curriculum supports opportunities for all students to reach their personal best.

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The Association has worked with successive governments and ministers of various political orientations over many decades, and while we have had differences of opinion, the response to this draft is unprecedented in its urgency and uniformity. Teachers are saying that students subject to instruction based on the proposed curriculum, including its mandated subject matter and approaches to teaching it, are likely to experience poor achievement, frustration and disengagement from schooling. Students' success in the early grades is a significant predictor of their success in later grades and, ultimately, of school completion. The alarming conclusion is that this curriculum may actually harm some students and undermine their learning for years to come, to the detriment of all that derives from or is dependent upon success in primary and secondary schooling. This is why the release and proposed implementation of the draft curriculum, even as a limited pilot, constitutes an emergency and resisting its implementation is, for our profession, a moral imperative.

In August 2019, my second month as Association president, you chose to unilaterally discontinue the Memorandum of Understanding that made the Alberta Teachers' Association and teachers a full partner in curriculum redesign, a decision that ended years of collaboration on creating, field testing, and implementing new curriculum. Since then, I have spoken with you informally and in more formal communications, including my letter of November 4, 2020 that went unanswered, about the importance of having classroom teachers involved in creating curriculum as they are experts in the age and grade appropriateness of content and design. Association staff have repeatedly requested an opportunity to review the draft curriculum in advance of its release only to be rebuffed and even told that the revisions being planned amounted to "very minor content additions to flesh out the previous curriculum draft." The suggestion that the Association has not been willing to participate actively in helping to facilitate effective curriculum development, or that widespread opposition to the 2020 draft is being trumped up by the Association is, frankly, disingenuous.

I will note that you have asked that we provide specific comments to improve the content of *Draft K-6 Curriculum*. We will not be doing that. Engaging in a piecemeal critique of a document in excess of 600 pages in length using a process that is ill defined, lacking in transparency and without credibility will do little to solve the problem you have created. In fact, it will only perpetuate the ill-conceived and idiosyncratic approach that culminated three weeks ago with the release of the deeply flawed *Draft K-6 Curriculum* document. Furthermore, as it has been recent practice for your ministry to solicit advice (while imposing non-disclosure requirements on those providing it), ignore that advice, and then claim credit for undertaking "consultation," we fear that any input we might provide would have no meaningful impact upon the content or design of a final product and simply serve to legitimize a predetermined outcome.

What we would be pleased to do is to help facilitate a meaningful dialogue between classroom teachers who have been active in curriculum development and are recognized leaders in the field with experts from the faculties of education, Indigenous and

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Francophone representatives and with public servants in your department's curriculum division who are capable, experienced and understanding of classroom-based realities and wisdom. That was the essence of the work we conducted under the partnership and this is what Provincial Executive Council has directed me to offer to you.

So then Minister, we can still work together to design a curriculum that enjoys the support of parents, curriculum experts and the profession. We can, in a spirit of open cooperation and collaboration, together create a curriculum that reflects best practices and is a source of pride and inspiration for Albertans. As we had demonstrated prior to the Memorandum of Agreement between the Association and the Government of Alberta being cancelled, the Association has expertise and resources to advance this important work and, on this basis, I am requesting a meeting to explore how we might proceed in this direction and restore the profession's ongoing involvement on curriculum development. It is critical for Alberta's students that we get this right. I await your invitation.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jason Schilling".

Jason Schilling
President

JCS/mm
cc Provincial Executive Council
Executive Staff Officers