



ACEE Response to Alberta Education's Curriculum Advisory Panel's Draft Ministerial Order for Student Learning and Panel Report February 2020

Interested in Alberta's curriculum development work? Provide your input.

ACEE reviewed Alberta Education's Curriculum Advisory Panel's [Draft Ministerial Order for Student Learning](#) and the [Recommendations on Direction for Curriculum Report](#) released by Alberta Education in January 2020. We are sharing our response (below) to help others develop their own responses. We've organized this into 'what we like' and 'what could be improved' categories.

You can provide input on the Draft Ministerial Order in an [online survey](#) - it closes February 24th, 2020. You can [download the survey questions](#) to help prepare your response (also available in French).

Response to the Draft Ministerial Order for Student Learning

Foundations for Learning

- What we like?
 - The reference made to students **applying their learning** and that **there is complexity in our ever changing world** "...students to apply their learning and make sense of a complex and changing world."
 - The mention of developing **engaged citizens** "These foundations....as they become engaged citizens in our democratic Canadian society."
- What could be improved?
 - **The focus is on building a core of knowledge but knowledge does not build the skills needed to apply that knowledge.** "These foundations build a core of knowledge that enables students to demonstrate the capacity to solve problems, think critically and manage the information..." **There is a piece missing on building skills and competencies that then allows them** "...to apply their learning and make sense of the complex and changing world."

Outcomes for Learning

- Knowledge Development - what we like?
 - The reference to **depth and breadth as well as concepts that are essential for life and we support this especially if it creates the connection that we are dependent on the environment to provide components essential for life** - food, clean air and clean water. "Students demonstrate mastery in both the depth

and breadth of key subject-specific content and concepts that are essential for life.”

- Touches on some **competencies such as critical thinking skills and reinforces the complex and changing world**, “They demonstrate critical thinking skills required to engage in and help shape a complex and changing world.”
- The focus on **creativity, exploring new ideas, questioning assumptions and applying their learning in a variety of situations**. “Students develop their creativity by exploring new ideas, questioning assumptions, applying their learning in a variety of life and career situations.
- Knowledge Development - what could be improved?
 - The focus is on critical thinking but it **must go beyond just critical thinking**. The foundations for learning mentions the complex and changing world. **Systems thinking is something students will need for their future as outlined in the [UN ESD key competencies for sustainability](#)**. By using critical thinking, systems thinking and problem-solving, it also helps create ‘engaged citizens’ - citizens that can understand complexity, multiple perspectives and create ‘yes/and’ and ‘win/win’ solutions.
- Character Development - what we like?
 - The mention of **applying knowledge, skill and competencies**, “Students demonstrate...and the application of their knowledge, skills and competencies.”
 - The mention of **resilience, curiosity and acting responsibly**, “They demonstrate resilience in the face of a challenge, approach the world with curiosity, act responsibly,...”
 - **Taking responsibility for their well-being** and research reinforces that children **spending time in nature helps with our health and personal well-being**, “Students take responsibility for their personal health and well-being and demonstrating empathy, concern...”
- Character Development - what could be improved?
 - That **acting responsibly should also include acting responsibly to our home, the planet**, “They demonstrate resilience....approach the world with curiosity, act responsibly...”
 - Focusing beyond just self and other people - **connecting with nature allows us to connect to something bigger than just ourselves (research shows this helps with personal well-being)** and we **need empathy, concern and support for taking care of our home, the planet**, “Students demonstrate a strong sense of self...” and “Students take responsibility for their personal health...and demonstrating empathy, concern....”
- Community Engagement - what we like?

- The use of **impact of their actions** this could also include impact of actions on our environment, “They recognize the **impact of their actions** and demonstrate an understanding of...”
- Like the use of the **terms innovation, shared responsibility, environmental stewardship and sustainability**, “Students demonstrate an understanding of economic development and innovation, recognizing the responsibility we share for environmental stewardship and sustainability.”
- Community Engagement - what could be improved?
 - Not sure the word ‘beliefs’ is the correct word, what about conflicting ‘beliefs’ in a community?
 - The impact of their individual actions but **should there also be some consideration to the impact of collective actions**, “They recognize the impact of their actions....”
 - The emphasis on understanding economic development seems to put the focus on economic development as our overall goal in life before everything else. There are other measures of quality of life beyond GDP measures. **It seems to put environmental stewardship as the ‘back seat’ to economic development when they should be considered equally as important. Students need to be able to create the ‘yes/and’ or ‘win/win’ solutions instead of ‘trade-offs’ or ‘either/or’ scenarios.** A suggestion for wording, “Students demonstrate an understanding of sustainability that requires innovation in all aspects of sustainability - economic, societal and environmental - recognizing that we share responsibility for all aspects of sustainability including environmental stewardship”.

Response to the Curriculum Advisory Panel: Recommendations on Direction for Curriculum Report

This section is much broader and covers a wide-range of topics related to education. We provided suggestions where we felt our expertise was best-suited.

Current Development - no comments

Curriculum Content

- What we like?
 - Recommendation 9 - there is much community expertise that can help deepen student learning and make their learning more relevant at the same time exposing students to a wide variety of career opportunities.
- What could be improved?
 - Recommendation 7 - not just knowledge outcomes - we do not want to see a curriculum just focused on knowledge and that the other important pieces for applying knowledge - critically thinking, systems thinking, problem-solving -

receive less emphasis and are often forgotten in achieving the knowledge outcomes.

- [Recommendation 8 & 9](#) - not just a focus on skills or trades, exposing students to the many career opportunities available to them, students 'don't know what they don't know' about the wide variety of career opportunities - the jobs of today may not be the jobs of tomorrow, especially for younger students, so how do we prepare them for future jobs.
- [Recommendation 11](#) - this seems very targeted to one component of society providing input on the curriculum-development process. Some research has identified the need for the 'softer skills' - collaboration, communication, etc. What is meant by 'the needs of Alberta's employers' - that could be so many things.

Assessment

- What we like? - no comments
- What could be improved?
 - [Recommendation 17](#) - standardized testing means teachers spend more time on preparing students for tests and then less time is spent on creating learning that enhances creativity, innovation and helps students apply their learning in deeper and more meaningful ways that leads to life-long learning.

Draft K-4 Curriculum

- What we like?
 - [Recommendation 25](#) - bringing in different perspectives and a deeper understanding of economic systems and entrepreneurship.
- What could be improved?
 - [Recommendation 23](#) - focus is all on knowledge which mimics the current (20 to 30 year old) curriculum. This is not serving students well in preparing them with the competencies/skills they need for a complex and changing world. Engaging students in applying their knowledge in relevant, meaningful learning is what deepens their learning and makes it stick. Students can know something for a test but it does not mean it will stay with them or be something they can use in other contexts.
 - [Recommendation 25](#) - this recommendation seems to be responding to what is currently being taught vs the new K-4 curriculum. The need for a balanced approach means there currently isn't a balanced approach. What does balanced mean anyway? Students in grade 1 will be 37 years old in 2050. A global energy transition is occurring so this needs to reflect that students need to understand our current reality (need for fossil fuels and our resource-rich economic base) while also developing the knowledge and skills needed to help Alberta manage this transition for continued prosperity. As [referenced](#) by recent statements from Alberta's Premier "I have a firm grasp of the obvious. There is no reasonable person that can deny that in the decades to come we will see a gradual shift from hydrocarbon-based energy to other forms of energy." Students are very

cognizant of the fact that Alberta is a resource-rich province, they know there will be an energy transition and want to be part of this, but they also worry about the jobs for their future. What do they need to understand about Alberta's current economy and to guide and be part of the transition that Alberta is facing for continued prosperity?