



April 12, 2021

To: Honourable Adriana LaGrange
Minister of Education
Office of the Minister
228 Legislature Building
10800-97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Delivered by Email

From: Lorna McIlroy
President, Alberta Retired Teachers' Association (ARTA)

Re: Unveiling of New K-6 Curriculum

Dear Minister LaGrange,

On Monday, March 29, 2021, Alberta Education released a draft of a new curriculum to guide K-6 education in Alberta. Like many educators in this province, retired teachers have been awaiting the rollout of this promised curriculum, eager to see how the field of education, to which we have devoted our careers, will evolve and adapt to a rapidly changing world. However, upon review of this proposed curriculum, we at the Alberta Retired Teachers' Association find ourselves very disappointed in what we see.

Your ministry has positioned this curriculum as a return to traditional teaching and learning practices. As retired teachers, we have been through many different eras of educational practices. But through those years, as this province honed its methods, we have always moved forward. Because of this, Alberta's education system has long been touted as one of the best in the world. We boast high test scores and produce engaged students who genuinely care about the world around them. But now, as the rest of the world surges ahead, your new curriculum has us moving in reverse, toward teaching practices and subject matter that educators have left behind for a reason.

In the age of digital connectedness, where information on any topic can be found at the press of a button, memorization-focused learning is simply not effective. Moreover, in a world that is increasingly inundated with fake news, it is dangerous to teach students to take facts at face value. If students of today are to prosper in the age of information, focus must be placed on teaching students how to think critically, draw connections, and make informed decisions. Put simply, it is our responsibility as educators to teach students how to think, not what to think.



The proposed subject matter of this new curriculum is also an area of concern. It includes lofty topics that are, frankly, more appropriate to a university lecture. While we admire the optimism, many of the proposed topics are simply too complex to be absorbed by elementary students in a meaningful way. What is more, there is a distinct American and European bias that is not befitting of Alberta's diverse classrooms.

Alberta's students come from all over the world, have rich cultural backgrounds, proud faith traditions, and are discovering where they fit along the spectrums of gender and sexuality. This curriculum largely ignores this diversity of experience, our national responsibility to truth and reconciliation, and the progress we have made towards inclusion and representation in the classroom.

Teachers are on the front lines of education. They are trained and experienced in children's development and higher order thinking. By failing to consult with teachers, you have failed to consult with Albertans, and as a result, have created a curriculum that does not suit the people it is meant to serve.

We implore you to revise this curriculum before moving forward with implementation, and to work together with Albertans to produce a curriculum that serves the needs of students in this province. As retired teachers, we belong to a vast network of educators, many of whom have spent their careers working on curriculum development. We hope that the future will bring a curriculum that looks forward and prepares the students of Alberta for the future that lies ahead of them.

Sincerely,

Lorna McIlroy
President, ARTA

cc:
Jason Schilling, President ATA
Dennis Theobald, Executive Secretary, ATA
Daniel Mulloy, CEO, ARTA
Honourable Jason Kenney, Premier of Alberta
Rachel Notley, NDP Opposition Leader
Sarah Hoffman, MLA for Edmonton-Glenora

