

May 20, 2021

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

Dear Minister LaGrange,

### **Request to halt piloting and implementation of the draft K-6 curriculum**

As a former school board Trustee, you would be aware that the role of a Trustee does not include oversight or drafting of the curriculum, but that it does include ensuring students have a modern, up-to-date curriculum. The job of Trustee also involves speaking up on behalf of parents when they express either support or concerns on issues pertinent to education.

The Edmonton Public Schools Board of Trustees is hearing, loudly and clearly, from parents (and 56 other school boards to date) that there are significant, well-founded concerns with the draft curriculum.

It has errors, examples of plagiarism, and content that is not age appropriate or reflective of Alberta's diversity. First Nations and Métis leaders, curriculum experts, educators, and parents agree that the current proposed curriculum is unsuitable for today's classrooms. Put simply, this assignment receives a grade of "incomplete."

We were encouraged to hear that your Ministry will be accepting comprehensive feedback from all school divisions, regardless of their decision to pilot the draft curriculum. As you are aware, EPSB has a long history of providing robust and meaningful feedback on different iterations of the curriculum. While the work of reviewing the current draft of the curriculum is underway within our Division, initial feedback from curriculum experts with Edmonton Public suggest there are significant areas of concern including:

- The outcomes reflecting the skills to support critical thinking and evaluating are not strongly represented across the draft curriculum and there is a lack of clear connections between historical events (e.g., the enslavement of African peoples, the KKK, residential schools) and the present.
- Content within the draft curriculum is often developmentally inappropriate. For example, Pascal's triangle is currently taught in high school and has been moved to Grade 2 in the draft curriculum, and division by a fraction is currently taught in Grade 8

and has been moved to Grade 6 in the draft curriculum. Furthermore, in the draft mathematics curriculum, students in Grade 3 are required to convert commonly used units of measure between metric and “Canadian” (imperial) units within 100; in the current mathematics curriculum, this is a concept addressed in Grade 10.

- The progression of content through grade levels in the draft curriculum is frequently problematic. For example, in the draft social studies curriculum in Grade 2, there is a focus on complex and specific topics such as global migration, ancient Greek culture and world religions. In the current social studies curriculum, students’ learning is contextualized in the world that is closest to the student (family, neighbourhood, community) and builds out into more complex topics and concepts as the grades progress.
- The draft curriculum lacks strong Indigenous perspectives. Concerns have been expressed from the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations and Rupertsland Institute that the draft curriculum presents a predominantly Eurocentric perspective and a minimized Indigenous perspective.

Given the concerns voiced by students, educators and parents across the province, our Board along with Evergreen Catholic School Division will be bringing forward the following emergent position statement for discussion at the Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) Spring General Meeting:

BE IT RESOLVED THAT, The ASBA shall formally and actively lobby the provincial government to delay the proposed K-6 curriculum to allow for further review and a rewrite to address the shortfalls that have been identified:

1. Having sufficient and meaningful consultation with primary stakeholder groups.
2. For the government to work with school boards and educational partners to create a first-class curriculum with suitable implementation dates for students and teachers.

We are calling for a rewrite of the curriculum given the numerous and valid concerns raised and the lack of support for it as demonstrated by the 56 boards who have chosen to not pilot the draft. We believe the only acceptable solution is to begin the process again, this time with full transparency and up-to-date education experts.

We agree that the current curriculum being used in schools does need updating and acknowledge that revisiting the development will cause a delay. However, given the lifespan and reach of curriculum, it is imperative that we get it right. Due to the continued impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the next year is also not an appropriate time to introduce a wholesale



change in curriculum. We must allow teachers and students to focus on re-establishing relationships and school practices and recover from the stress of the last year.

Students, staff, and families will not tolerate their first-rate education system being subjected to anything less than a first-rate curriculum redesign. There is material in the previous draft curriculum, much contributed through the expertise of our staff, that could be used, thereby saving time and money in development. Let's work together to design a curriculum that will continue to make Alberta the gold standard in public education and give our students the skills and knowledge they need for success.

Sincerely,



Trisha Estabrooks  
Board Chair

KM/mj

- c. Lorrie Jess, President, Alberta School Boards Association  
Ron McKay, Board Chair, Evergreen Catholic School Division

