

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

June 19, 2001

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Dossdall, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: New Social Studies Framework

ORIGINATOR: M. de Man, Department Head Designate

RESOURCE

STAFF: Carolyn Hunter, Ian Kupchenko, Stuart Wachowicz

RECOMMENDATION

1. That support be given to the report of the Capital Region Curriculum Committee regarding the Western Canadian Protocol Common Curriculum Framework for Social Studies
2. That a letter be sent by the Board providing input to Alberta Learning about the development of the new Alberta Program of Studies (K-12) for Social Studies

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**Background:** Edmonton Public School's concerns about the Western Canadian Protocol (WCP) Framework for Social Studies, as presented to the Board for information on May 22, 2001, have been heard by Alberta Learning.

The main issues brought forward by Edmonton Public Schools were consistent with the views expressed throughout the province. Alberta Learning is now presenting these numerous concerns as major recommendations for changes to the WCP. The Protocol Committee of the Western Provinces is meeting in early June to share the recommendations for changes to the document. A summary of Alberta Learning's recommendations expressed a need to:

- place citizenship as the central focus of the framework with identity and diverse perspective possibly taking a more central place
- reduce the number of specific learning outcomes by focusing on essential outcomes for social studies
- expand the current content themes to include Eastern Canadian, European, and global dimensions
- limit the common curriculum framework to content themes, leaving the identification of sub-themes to the jurisdictions
- edit the specific learning outcomes to ensure alignment with the cognitive and developmental needs of the learners for whom they are intended
- ensure that diverse cultural voices, including Aboriginal and Francophone, are embedded throughout the framework

- ensure that the framework undergoes a process of objective and substantive editing
- review all content themes for clarity, linkages and developmental appropriateness
- review and revise extensively the skills and processes to ensure they are developed in a consistent and meaningful way throughout the framework

There remain some concerns which have not yet been addressed by Alberta Learning.

- Although it appears that the framework document will be extensively revised, work remains to be done on the Alberta Social Studies Program of Studies beginning this summer, prior to the framework document being rewritten, reviewed and accepted.
- The implementation plan for the framework and subsequent program of studies is being maintained.
  - WCP Framework completion – Fall 2001
  - Alberta Program of Studies completion – Spring 2002
  - K-9 curriculum pilot – Fall 2003
  - 10-12 curriculum pilot – Fall 2004
  - full implementation K-12 – Fall 2005
- The plan has very little time built in for review and consultation of the framework and even less for the Alberta Program of Studies, both of which appear to be headed for a parallel development.
- The timeline means a very short period provided to publishers, which may have an implication on both the number of publishers who may express interest and the quality of the resources teachers will have available.
- No indication has been provided as to the future of the grade 10-12 program of studies. It is essential that the general outcomes be defined and articulated as part of the K-9 program of studies prior to development of a curriculum. In addition, no time has been spent in discussing with teachers, post-secondary institutions and other stakeholders as to what the high school curriculum should contain.
- There are presently three programs (Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and Aboriginal Studies) in place with which the new program of studies must articulate.
- There is an indication, yet no firm commitment that the new Alberta Program of Studies will have:
  - a clearly developed scope and sequence of knowledge, skills and processes
  - a chronological development of significant events in Canadian and world history
  - a strong commitment to developing geography, economic and political science knowledge and skills
  - a global perspective
  - an issues based problem solving base

Finally it is a concern that Alberta has taken observer status for the 10-12 portion of the WCP Framework, as has Manitoba. British Columbia has observer status for K-12. This certainly puts in question the value of the WCP concept.

The Capital Regional Boards have agreed on a common position on the WCP Framework (Appendix I). Even though the Framework will undergo substantial modifications it is recommended that the Board support this document, displaying the unanimity of a large number of districts on this issue.

It is also recommended that the Board forward a letter to the Minister requesting the following be considered as development of the new social studies curriculum proceeds:

- a phased implementation, once curriculum is approved, as per recommendation of the Capital Region Boards
- the new program of studies K-12 be based on a K-12 plan or framework, identified before the program of studies is developed
- chronological history and geography be written into an issues based curriculum
- the new program of studies, at the high school level, articulate with the topics in Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and Aboriginal Studies
- Edmonton Public Schools be given at least equal representation on social studies curriculum committees, as compared to the other three large urban boards.

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APPENDIX I: Response to the Western Canadian Protocol Common Curriculum Framework for Social Studies K-9

**RESPONSE TO THE WESTERN CANADIAN PROTOCOL COMMON  
CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL STUDIES K-9**

**Prepared by the Edmonton Capital Region Curriculum Committee  
May 2001**

**Background:**

This document has been prepared in response to Alberta Learning's request for feedback from school jurisdictions on the February 2001 draft of the Western Canadian Protocol Common Curriculum Framework for Social Studies K-9.

On Friday, April 20, representatives from the school divisions belonging to the Edmonton Capital Region, met to discuss and reach a common consensus on how the framework, if adopted in its present form, would affect the implementation and ultimate student achievement in the area of social studies.

The key issues illustrated below reflect the common concerns and questions that the members of this curriculum committee share on behalf of their respective school jurisdictions. The points will be reviewed and supported by the superintendent of each school jurisdiction.

**Membership of the Edmonton Capital Region Curriculum Committee:**

The goal of the Committee is to meet on a regular basis to discuss common educational challenges and opportunities that impact teaching and learning in each respective jurisdiction. The eight jurisdictions that approved this report are: Black Gold Regional; Buffalo Regional; Edmonton Catholic Schools; Edmonton Public Schools; Elk Island Catholic Schools; Elk Island Public; Parkland Regional Division; Sturgeon Regional; Greater St. Albert Catholic; and Greater St. Albert Protestant.

**Edmonton Capital Region Response to the WCP:**

1. *A pedagogically appropriate scope and sequence in which all children can reach their full potential in becoming lifelong learners should be central to all curricular frameworks.*

The WCP Common Curriculum Framework for Social Studies:

- For students in early grades some outcomes, especially those related to change over time, are developmentally inappropriate.
- The outcomes in the document need to be developed around a clearly defined scope and sequence.

2. *The literature illustrates that successful curricular frameworks are designed and organised around culminating learning outcomes that reflect the range of learning expectations and performances for each grade level.*

The WCP Common Curriculum Framework for Social Studies:

- Is far too detailed with too many outcomes.
- The framework should provide a delineation of the range of knowledge, skill and attitude outcomes expected for each grade level.

3. *Crucial to successful implementation of this program, resources must reflect the specific outcomes of the Program of Studies and therefore can **only** be designed and written **subsequent to the development of the Program of Studies, not after the Framework.***
4. *The literature suggests that learning outcomes in curricular frameworks be concerned with what **knowledge, skills, and attitudes** students should **possess when they exit school and enter into the workforce or to post secondary institutions.***

The WCP Common Curriculum Framework for Social Studies:

- **Does not illustrate learning outcomes for grades 10 – 12.**
- The expectation would be that a K-12 Framework (built in a developmentally appropriate way) be in place and approved by the jurisdictions **prior** to a call for resources, and that the grade 12 exit outcomes be in place before any part of the framework is approved.

5. *A curricular framework should have a balance of learning outcomes from grade to grade that can be successfully implemented with effective planning models and support resources.*

The WCP Common Curriculum Framework for Social Studies:

- Has **too many Specific Learning Outcomes** for each grade level predicting it will be difficult to acquire and develop resources in support of the outcomes.
- Will be **difficult to plan and implement** with such a **wide variety** and **inconsistency** of learning outcomes from grade to grade; there is **not enough time** in the school day to implement so many outcomes.

6. *A curricular framework should be adaptable for a variety of leaning environments.*

The WCP Common Curriculum Framework for Social Studies:

- In its present form, the content grade level themes will not be adaptable for **combined grade or multi-age learning environments.**

7. *A curricular framework for social studies should include all the dimensions of Social Studies instruction, which includes current events.*

The WCP Common Curriculum Framework for Social Studies:

- Does not include strategies, outcomes, or reference to the role of current events in social studies instruction which is imperative for critical thinking and applying social studies learnings to real world issues.

### **Concerns Related to the Alberta Program of Studies:**

*Ministries of Education developing curricular frameworks should have a consistent plan of action and strategies for implementation of new programs of study that are timely, fiscally responsible, and manageable by school jurisdictions.*

- Presently, the predicted date for mandated implementation of the new K-12 Program of Studies for Social Studies in Alberta is 2005.

- With many existing financial constraints on school jurisdictions, the retention of three topics per grade, if it should require three unique resources per grade, creates a serious resourcing concern for districts.
- The current implementation schedule while allowing a single optional implementation year, suggests a mandatory implementation from K-12 in a single year (2005). This is simply an unattainable goal given current levels of funding and the human and material resources that will be involved.

A phased schedule such as the following is recommended:

Year 1:	Grades 1, 4, 7, 10
Year 2:	Grades 2, 5, 8, 11
Year 3:	Grades 3, 6, 9, 12

This will permit a seamless transition for students and facilitate the development of Learner Assessments which can fully reflect the new curriculum, helping Achievement Tests and Diploma Examinations properly assess the impact of the new curriculum.