

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

May 22, 2001

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: E. Dossdall, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: District Response to the Proposed New Social Studies Curriculum

ORIGINATOR: M. de Man, Department Head Designate

RESOURCE

STAFF: Carolyn Hunter, Ian Kupchenko, Stuart Wachowicz

INFORMATION

Alberta Learning is part of the Western Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Basic Education (WCP). The draft WCP K-9 Framework document for social studies has been released for reaction. The framework document is the guide which provinces must follow in writing the subsequent social studies curriculum or program of studies. Following potential amendment, based on input from the present round of consultations the Framework may receive approval by the WCP partners as early as August. At that time a call will be issued, to create text resource to support the curriculum.

Given that the framework determines the content of the text resources, it is most critical that high quality reaction be forthcoming to Alberta Learning to ensure the Framework can be used to create an effective social studies curriculum. School districts were asked to respond.

To produce the Edmonton Public Schools response, a large number of district teachers have studied and reacted to the draft framework, facilitated by the social studies consultants (Appendix I).

The response outlines both the major concerns as well as specific issues. By identifying and explaining each concern it is hoped Alberta Learning will have sufficient information to be able to improve the document, even though it may require a near rewrite. (A copy of the draft framework is available in the Trustees' Reading Room.)

Brief Summary of the concerns addressed:

The Framework:

- lacks a clear scope and sequence of knowledge and skill outcomes
- by attempting to address issues from many perspectives, it fails to identify a core body of knowledge and skills that every citizen should have
- contains far too many outcomes at a given grade level
- has many outcomes which are age inappropriate
- does not address the statement from the Definition of Basic Education in Alberta – Ministerial Order No. 004/98 Appendix to the School Act, February 10, 1998, that

students will “know the history and geography of Canada and have a general understanding of world history and geography”

- is to be approved as a K-9 document before the 10-12 component is planned or designed. Articulations between Divisions III and IV will be a problem as in the math program if the program is not developed as a K-12 unit
- presents serious concerns to the Aboriginal community, part of which is the degree of overlap between the proposed framework and Aboriginal Studies 10/20/30
- implementation plan, while allowing for an optional implementation of some levels in 2004-2005, will mandate full implementation (K-12) in 2005-2006. This will present a significant inservicing and resourcing problem.

SW:dh

APPENDIX I: Response to the Western Canadian Protocol Common Curriculum Framework for Social Studies – Kindergarten to Grade 9

**RESPONSE TO THE  
WESTERN CANADIAN PROTOCOL  
COMMON CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK  
FOR SOCIAL STUDIES  
KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE 9**

May 2001



This document is in response to Alberta Learning's request for feedback on the latest draft of the WCP Common Curriculum Framework for Social Studies. It has been prepared following study of the document by: Social Studies consultants, department heads, and teachers as well as principals, leadership services and parents. Drafts have been circulated and reactions received and accordingly, amendments made. The completed document thus will reflect the views of the large majority of individuals involved in our district.

It needs to be noted that the response is not in the format of the Alberta Learning questionnaire. The questionnaire did not permit the respondents to focus effectively on issues that were identified in our systems discussions.

There is almost unanimous agreement that periodic curriculum review is necessary to ensure that both curricular content and resources are appropriate for the needs of students. It is also agreed that the curriculum must be updated to ensure that the curriculum is consistent with modern teaching practice. Many years have elapsed since the last major review and revision of the Social Studies curriculum and the initiative of Alberta Learning are commended.

Following extensive and thorough study of the new curriculum, it is evident that it offers significant improvements in some areas. At the same time, district staff has identified many major concerns. It is the intent of this paper not only to identify the issues but also to suggest ways in which the issues may be addressed thus overcoming inevitable problems of writing the new Program of Studies.

### **Strengths in the Social Studies Framework**

The W.C.P. Framework has made a major effort in its collaboration in its inclusion of Aboriginal and Francophone representatives as full and equal partners throughout the process. Alberta Learning should be commended for this effort. Because of this education collaboration the document reflects the "**respect for diversity orientation to citizenship.**" The respect for diversity orientation promotes the acceptance of diverse cultural understandings and the valuing of a mosaic of different ways of life and belief systems. The framework also expands this diverse national citizenship orientation by also including global perspectives.

With the educational collaboration the document also reflects a focus on **understanding ones own identity** as it relates to the various communities one belongs to: Aboriginal, Francophone or the rest of Canada. This approach to citizenship education promotes self-esteem and a strong sense of identity is essential in the lives of good citizens. The curriculum includes the wide scope so that students are able to discover and come to an understanding of their identity within whichever community they are a member. Both of these new approaches are bold moves for Social Studies.

## **Issues that Have Raised Concerns Among District Staff**

When designing the framework a number of factors need to be considered. First and foremost there must be clarity about the goals, particularly the citizenship orientations. The problem with the approach is that there needs to be a balance between "the respect for diversity and cohesion of society". This framework focused on diversity and the understanding of ones own identity. It ignores the need for a core body of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that every citizen of the country should learn as well as similarities of Canadian identity. This basic problem explains why the majority of Edmonton Public personnel and parents had complaints such as:

1. Disagreement on approaches to teaching citizenship - issues approach, controversial issues, inquiry approach, global orientation. (Diversity orientation and understanding identity are relatively new.)
2. Being upset over the lack of scope and sequence of knowledge and skills. (This is natural because the framework does not identify this core body of knowledge because the focus is diversity. In addition, without the high school program identified one cannot know whether students will be prepared when leaving school).
3. Being upset over the amount of content. All felt there was too much in each grade. (This is natural because the framework focuses on identity and one needs a very broad in scope so that everyone's identity is covered).

Edmonton Public felt that the hard work of identifying the core knowledge and the shared identity was missing. No one had a problem with a framework that acknowledges that there is a shared body of knowledge that is enhanced through diversity. Nor did anyone have a problem with a framework that focused on enabling students to live lives consistent with their own identity.

We felt that the basic core program of knowledge skills and attitudes must draw from the Definition of Basic Education in Alberta - Ministerial Order No. 004/98 Appendix to the School Act, February 10, 1998. The framework must explain in more detail the basic core identified in this appendix.

- Know the history and geography of Canada and have a general understanding of world history and geography.
- Understand Canada's political, social and economic systems within a global context.
- Respect the cultural diversity and common values of Canada
- Recognize the importance of personal well being, and appreciate how family and others contribute to that well being.
- Demonstrate desirable personal characteristics, such as respect, responsibility, fairness, honesty, caring, loyalty, and commitment to democratic ideals.
- Research an issue thoroughly, and evaluate the credibility and reliability of information sources.
- Demonstrate critical and creative thinking skills in problem solving and decision-making.
- Demonstrate competence in using information technologies
- Read for information, understanding and enjoyment
- Write and speak clearly, accurately and appropriately for the context.

## Specific Concerns Identified in the Framework

### Vision Statement, Definition of Social Studies and the Role of Social Studies

- The statements were clear and generally reflected the views of Social Studies.
- Some would have liked a stronger focus on citizenship.
- In the "Role of Social Studies" bullet #4 was not clear and no one was sure of what teachers were to do.

### Guidelines

- The personal, social and cultural dimensions were clearly stated.
- In "Flexibility and Balance", the breadth and depth of content needs to be clearly delineated.
- In "Diverse Learning and Teaching Strategies", on-the-land experiences needs defining.

### Knowledge, Understanding, Skills and Processes

- Throughout this section it was felt that terms needed to be defined in concrete terms so that teachers knew what was required. For example "beyond problem solving and decision making" or "good communication skills".
- The descriptions tend to be beyond the developmental levels of student.

### Structure of the Document

- The majority of our contributors expressed a desire for a chart what would summarize the scope and sequencing of the knowledge, skills and attitudes. The document is very cumbersome to read and it was very difficult to ascertain what was to be taught in which grade and how much had already been taught in prior grades.
- The majority also demanded that the document define the expectations of the skills and a sequential development of those skills. For example teachers and parents requested that the written expression component be laid out so that at each grade everyone knew what was to be mastered. **Presently only in Grades K-3 and in Grade 8 is writing a required skill.**
- The major concern was that the document was a curriculum and not a framework.

### General Learning Outcomes

- The GLO's were too wordy and ambiguous. They had a hard time understanding exactly what was required.
- Far too many GLO's - collapse them from 8 to 5
- GLO #4 - concerns were raised that this was more science oriented than Social Studies, especially as it is applied in later grades.
- GLO #5 is developmentally inappropriate for children prior to Grade 3. It was felt that it definitely should not be the focus in Grade 2
- The application of the GLO's appeared to be artificial. They appear to be included without a clear connection to the grade's content theme. Thus, hampering a sequential development of the Specific Learning Outcomes (SLO's).
- Citizenship, GLO #1 should be at the centre rather than the student. Citizenship should be the prime focus for the entire framework.

## Content Themes

- Main concern was that expectations are not developmentally appropriate for the age groups they are intended.
- There are still 3 distinct themes per grade and concerns were raised relating to: time and cost of materials.
- Parts of the themes are very closely related to other subjects but these themes are not taught in the same grades.
- Division 1 and 2 teachers were unanimous that these themes could not be taught in combined grades.
- There was no place built into the framework to include current events
- Kindergarten -Being Together and Sharing within one's own classroom and school should be the focus. Recommend deletion of national and global communities. Highlight and use "thoughtfulness and sensitivity toward others."
- Concern that with ½ day in Kindergarten the content theme is expecting too much to be covered. In addition, Alberta does not recognize Kindergarten as a mandatory program.
- Grade One – Concern that students come from a variety of communities to attend school. Thus, studying a community is difficult because it is not the community where they may live. Focus on the relationship with family and school delete the study of communities. Felt that sub-theme three did not fit in this grade. Concerned with the wording: " Understanding the various factors that bring people together in groups."
- Grade Two – Previous grade three material. Concept of change over time was a difficult concept for grade three students to comprehend. Ability of students to project into the future is too much of a stretch. Areas of concern: "linguistic characteristics", "investigate (community) origins", "Canadian Communities today and in the future" Liked the connection with the interdependence that exists. Would like to see a Canadian aboriginal culture studied at this grade level.
- Grade Three – Ancient Egypt/Medieval Europe delete. Would like to see a study of one community (past/present); example past/present Canadian community. Concerned that the first time our student's study about an Aboriginal culture, it is outside Canada (delete Australian Aboriginals).
- Would like to see in general a development of Canadian Nationality. Beginning in K and moving throughout the grades. A spiralling sequential development appears to be lacking, as is a geography/mapping component (Country, oceans, provinces, cities, major lakes, rivers...), and government.
- Grade 4 - The study of levels of government was too difficult at this grade level. It was felt that many Grade 6 students had difficulty with these concepts and the Provincial Achievement results backs up the teachers perceptions. These concepts would become very difficult to teach if there was a Grade3/4 grouping.
- Grade 5 - The themes were appropriate and most were generally pleased with the content. The only complaint was the amount of material to be covered in the grade.
- Grade 6 - The global focus topics were too difficult for this grade and many felt that the 3 sub themes did not flow together. The sub themes were distinct units of study.
- Grade 7 - The 62 knowledge goals were considered far too many to possible cover in one year. Many of these goals were beyond the capabilities of the students. The

focus of the themes needed to be more global and to focus much less on the Canada's north. The three themes were not conceptually linked to one another.

- Grade 8 - It was universally felt that 66 skill objectives, 60 knowledge objectives and 12 value and attitudes to develop was an impossible task in one year. Many of these single knowledge objectives were entire courses of study.
- Grade 9 - Many were concerned that this topic was beyond the level of Grade 9 students. All but GLO 6 and 8 were highlighted but these two GLO's actually had more coverage in the grade than the highlighted GLO's. Again too many objectives were to be covered in this grade.

### Specific Learning Outcomes

The way that Specific Learning Outcomes SLO's was discussed depended very much on the division. Division 1 and 2 were very concerned with problems posed by specific SLO's. Divisions 3 and 4 were more global and were much more concerned with the GLO's and the general direction of the entire document. The following list represents the summary of the concerns each division had about the document.

#### **Kindergarten – O-S-#**

- 01 – too vague delete “and the world”
- 02 – not developmentally ready
- 03 – need teacher support
- 06 – Awareness level only
- 08 – Awareness level only
- 11 – Math and Science
- 12 – Awareness level only
- 14 – delete community
- 16 – too vague
- 21 – change peers for others
- 26 – not appropriate at this level
- 28 – delete redundant
- 30 – Learn and use not develop (wording)
- 34 – No Peers, Teacher only
- 35 – not developmentally ready
- 38 – Parent assisted
- 39 - 41 - not developmentally ready

#### **Grade One**

- 02 – participate in....
- 05 – participate in...
- 07 – family and school only
- 14 – home and school only
- 17 – developmentally not ready to construct
- 20 – not developmentally ready
- 36 – remove “gifts”
- 42 – not developmentally ready



### **Grade Two**

09 – not developmentally ready  
10 – remove unique  
16 – remove gifts  
34 – too vague

### **Grade Three**

20 – not developmentally ready  
21 – remove scale  
23 – not developmentally ready  
37 – science

- **Values/Attitudes & Knowledge/Understanding**

#### **Kindergarten**

Delete “Community” from all  
K-C-05 – science concept  
V-D-01 – delete in the world and change to within the class  
K-D-01 – change to appreciate instead of recognize  
K-D-02 – delete  
V-I-05 & 06 – combine  
K-I-01 change to share interests and talents  
K-I-02 delete too complex  
K-I-03 not developmentally ready  
K-L-01 – not developmentally ready  
K-L-03 – too vague  
K-T-01 – change seasonal events to special days  
K-T-02 – Grade one science topic

#### **Grade One**

Sub-theme three does not fit remove Community/world in all  
K-C-04 – recognition of other languages needed  
K-C-05 – choice of language  
V-I-04 – remove “gifts”  
K-L-03 – science topic  
K-L-04 – many children do not share the same neighbourhood  
K-T-01 – science  
V-T-01 – remove past  
K-P-02 – not developmentally appropriate  
K-P-03 & 04 – not developmentally appropriate

#### **Grade Two**

K-C-08 – Language of choice  
K-I-01 – change elders to community stories  
K-I-02 - not developmentally appropriate  
K-L-06 – not developmentally appropriate

K-L-07 – grade 4 Social Studies  
K-T-03 – 13 – Remove past study not developmentally appropriate  
K-G-01 – Does not fit  
K-E-02 – Does not fit, not developmentally appropriate

### **Grade Three**

K-C-01 not developmentally appropriate  
K-C-02 does not fit if studying globally  
K-I-01 – Does not fit if studying globally  
K-I-02 – Assumes all children have travelled  
K-V-02 – change “how to” to those who  
V-L-06 – does not fit with global choices of study  
K-L-01 – not developmentally appropriate  
K-T-03 – does not fit with the global choices of study  
V-G-02 – does not fit with the global choices of study  
K-G-01- 03 – include “with the communities studied”

### **Grade Four**

S02 - detecting bias - difficult and beyond the capabilities of a grade 4 student  
S03 high level  
S05 - not clear for expectation  
S08 - bullies - is this Social Studies (Safe and Caring Schools objective)  
S15 - 16 - Science in Grade 5  
S17-18 - well done  
S19 - research resources at this age level not readily available - depends on the Community and the school - great inequities  
S30 - is this necessary to say - " Is this Social Studies or just everyday teaching"  
"Everyday living for everyone"  
S34 - some homogeneous classes makes this difficult  
S39-40 - out of school programs not available to all - this is not the school's responsibility -This is personal development topic - does not belong in Social Studies.  
S-49 - is this feasible? Illustrate vs. sequential

### **Grade 5**

5-S-30 - too general to be of any use  
5-S-33 - why are specific teaching techniques being included?  
5-K-G-01 - too large to have any meaning  
5-K-G-03 - too broad to give direction  
5-K-P-01-05 - this is both Political Science approach and History, this is an entire year

### **Grade 6**

6-K-I-04 - how can this be done without critical viewing skills being taught in earlier grades?  
6-K-L-02 - 03 - Grade 5 Science

6-K-G-04 - too large a topic (entire year)  
6-K-G-05- 08 - beyond the conceptual ability of students in this grade  
6-K-P-04-08 - beyond the ability of students  
6-K-E-02 - far too large a topic

**IN THIS DIVISION WRITING IS MISSING AS A SKILL TO BE DEVELOPED -  
A MAJOR OMISSION**

**Grade 7**

7-K-I-04 - repeating Grade 6  
7-K-I-08 - too similar to 04 above  
7-K-L - these objectives are a totally separate from the 7-K-T objectives. Which will require totally separate resources.  
7-K-G-02 - beyond the student's conceptual ability to truly understand  
7-K-G-06 - far too large a topic (entire years study)

**Grade 8**

8-K-01-08 - missing the British Parliamentary system with the Structure and an understanding of how each section operates is a Major omission.  
8-K-I-06 - this is an entire years study  
8-K-P-01 - 06 - this is an entire year of study

**Grade 9**

9-K-I-01 -06 - repeating the same concepts from division 1 and 2  
9-K-I-08F - not a knowledge objective  
9-K-T-07 - does this not apply to all of Canada?  
9-K-L-10 - all other Canadians are missing

**Division 4 - High School**

The high school program is still to be developed. This in itself poses a problem. We have no idea what a graduate will know when they leave in Grade 12. All the deficiencies of the framework K - 9 cannot be fixed in just the last 3 years of high school.

**General Observations**

- Too large an emphasis on health. Many of the objectives come out of the health curriculum and Career development.
- Lack of writing as a skill objective - only mentioned as a required skill in K - 3 and in Grade 8. This skill needs specifics - sequentially developed aspect of writing needs to be identified in every grade. Not just in general terms such as - "Students will communicate by writing."
- Praise for the "taking action " component of the curriculum but this needs to be strengthened. Worried that this will be removed or weakened.
- Needs provision for Current Events - A serious deficiency
- Too much study of cultures in Canada and getting to know your own identity. Need to examine history, geography, economics and politics.

Grade 9 - this is the present Grade 10 curriculum and it is too difficult for many grade 10's. The course is streamed with two levels - 10 and 13. Wanting to teach even more at only one level in Grade 9 may cause some real problems.

Streaming should be maintained however the high school program should be parallel so that students can easily move between the streams. This is essential to ensure the greatest success for student achievement.

The current High School curriculums needs a rewrite but over all teachers are satisfied with both the content and the approach. What is needed is to remove some of the content so that greater in-depth study can occur. The basic history, politics, and economics still must be covered for a grade 12 students to have a reasonable knowledge upon leaving school.

#### Concerns from the Edmonton Public Aboriginal Consulting Group

1. A major concern was that throughout the document many specific Francophone objectives are identified. These same objectives could just as well be identified as Aboriginal objectives but they are not. Page 54 is an example - each Francophone objective could easily be a distinctive Aboriginal objective. Each Aboriginal objective is matched by a Francophone objective. There are very few stand alone Aboriginal objectives. The ratio of Francophone objectives as compared to Aboriginal is:

|  | Francophone | skills | values and attitudes | knowledge |
|--|-------------|--------|----------------------|-----------|
|  |             | 5      | 33                   | 70        |
|  | Aboriginal  | 5      | 16                   | 47        |

2. The concept of Citizenship does not include the aspect of spirituality, which is important to the Aboriginal perspective.
3. The first time that students study Aboriginal people is in Grade 3 and they examine Aborigines of Australia. Studying Canadian Aboriginals begins in Grade 5.

#### Specific Concerns

Page 50 - 2-K-C-07 should be Metis people not citizens

Grade 3 - Japan, Aborigines, Ancient Egypt and Medieval Europe plus United Nations Human Rights Charter is way beyond what can be accomplished in one year and is beyond the student's cognitive ability. (Page 67)

Page 79 - 4-K-G-05-A - level of difficulty - beyond a grade 4

Page 110 - 7S-14-16 - unclear, vague

Page 111 - 7-S-18 - use ignorance to build more ignorance? Does this mean prior learning?

Page 113- no writing required???

Page 114 - 7-K-C-02 - concept of citizenship is an issue within the aboriginal community especially as stated here - spirituality missing.

Page 116 - 7-K-D-10 - what about aboriginal beliefs?

Page 117 - 7-V-L-01 - only of nature?

Page 122 - Content Theme summary - opinions presented as content

Page 129 - much more needs to be included especially in the nature of "World views".

Page 131 - 8-K-L-06 not sure what motivate is the proper term here?

The entire Grade 8 needs more Aboriginal Perspective when examining Canadian History.

Grade 9 - Pages 145- 146 is drawing directly from Aboriginal Studies 10,20 and 30. This is a major problem. Social Studies and Aboriginal Studies are to be unique. By including this material it is undermining the Aboriginal course in High School because students will say " I have already taken this". **THIS IS A MAJOR ISSUE.**