

# Curriculum Redesign:

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is provincial curriculum?

- The British Columbia provincial curriculum defines for teachers what students are expected to know and be able to do in their grade and area of learning. It provides the learning standards for students in BC schools.

### Why is BC's curriculum changing?

- In today's technology-enabled world, students have instant access to a limitless amount of information. For all students, the great value of education is in learning the skills to successfully locate, analyze, and apply the information they need in their work and personal lives after they graduate.
- Experts from BC and around the world advise that curriculum should put more emphasis on concepts, competencies, and processes.
- The existing curriculum can restrict student learning because it has so many objectives to cover. The highly prescriptive nature of the existing curriculum puts it at odds with the vision of a more personalized learning experience set out in BC's Education Plan.

### How is curriculum changing?

- Drawing on extensive research and ongoing consultations with educators across the province, the Ministry of Education is redesigning curriculum to fit with the modern education system that is needed for today's world. The curriculum redesign aims to:
  - ✓ reduce the prescriptiveness of the existing curriculum while ensuring a consistent focus on the essential elements of learning
  - ✓ allow teachers and students the flexibility to personalize the learning experience to better match each student's individual strengths and needs
  - ✓ balance the foundational skills that students need to learn with the "big ideas" or concepts that they need to understand to succeed in their education and their lives
- Curriculum is being designed to support development of critical thinking, communication skills, and personal and social competence.

## What will be the same?

- There will continue to be rigorous learning standards in each area of learning.
- There will continue to be an emphasis in all grades on the fundamentals of literacy and numeracy. Subjects such as Math, Science, Language Arts, and Social Studies will remain at the heart of every student's education. But with the redesigned curriculum, students will be able to develop a deeper understanding of those subjects and their fundamental concepts.
- Curriculum is now and will continue to be designed for the majority of students; classroom teachers will continue to adapt or modify standards for selected students as appropriate.

## What will be different?

- All areas of learning are being redesigned at the same time using a common framework.
- The structure of the redesigned curriculum is more flexible to enable teachers to develop cross-curricular learning experiences for students and take advantage of current topics of interest to students.
- In the redesigned curriculum framework, core competencies — such as critical thinking, communication, and social responsibility — are made explicit.
- Each area of learning features Big Ideas that are important for students to understand.
- The curriculum is balanced: it emphasizes core foundational skills while focusing on higher-level conceptual understandings.
- Standards remain rigorous; however, the new learning standards are more open in nature, making them less rigid, less detailed, and less focused on minor facts.
- Aboriginal perspectives and content have been authentically integrated into every subject.

## What are core competencies and how are they related to the curriculum?

- Core competencies are a set of intellectual, personal and social competencies that students develop through the course of their schooling.
- The core competency profiles represent a continuum of development from emerging to sophisticated levels. While the development process involved over 300 educators in 20 school districts, they are at an early stage of development
- The competency profiles and illustrations are intended as classroom resources for teacher assessment and student self-assessment.



- Core competencies are embedded in each area of learning and are activated through students' learning experiences and activities.
- Because core competencies are embedded in the structure of the curriculum, it is expected they will become a key part of future provincial assessments and ongoing assessment/reporting. How they will be made explicit in reporting and provincial assessment is still under discussion and development.

## What are the benefits of the new curriculum?

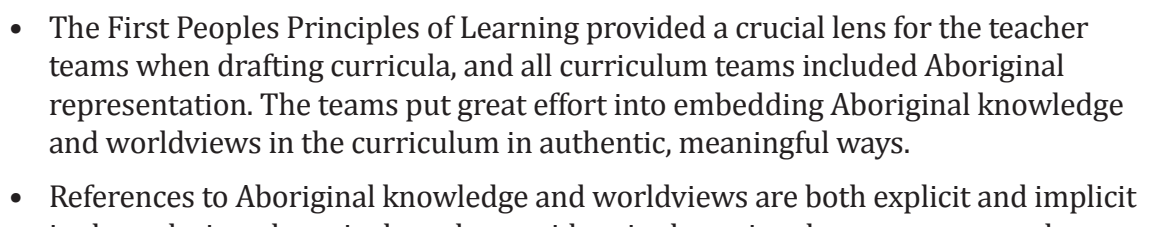
- With the redesigned curriculum, students will have increased opportunities to gain the essential learning and life skills necessary to live and work successfully in a complex, interconnected, and rapidly changing world.
- Students will focus on acquiring skills and competencies to help them use knowledge critically and creatively, to solve problems ethically and collaboratively, and to make the decisions necessary to succeed in our increasingly globalized world. They will be more engaged in their learning, explore their passions, and gain important employment skills.

## What research supports these directions?

- Trends in national and international jurisdictions have been reviewed and authorities on curriculum and assessment design have been consulted. Transformation work has been informed by a wide variety of researchers, including Sir Ken Robinson, Lynn Erickson, and Grant Wiggins, and organizations such as Harvard (Project Zero) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Many high-achieving jurisdictions around the world (e.g., Singapore, Finland) are making similar shifts in their curriculum.
- BC's curriculum redesign builds on current child development and learning theories research. Consultations, research, and world authorities all indicate that learning is best supported by flexible, competency-driven, concept-based, and inclusive curriculum.
- As part of the Ministry of Education's work on core competencies, several researchers were commissioned to summarize the literature in critical thinking, creative thinking, and social and personal responsibility. Reference information connected to this aspect of the redesign effort is available on the ministry's [website](#).

## Why is Aboriginal content being embedded in the curriculum and what does this look like?

- Aboriginal perspectives and knowledge are a part of the historical and contemporary foundation of BC and Canada. An important goal in integrating Aboriginal perspectives into curriculum is to ensure that all learners have opportunities to understand and respect their own cultural heritage as well as that of others.

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- The First Peoples Principles of Learning provided a crucial lens for the teacher teams when drafting curricula, and all curriculum teams included Aboriginal representation. The teams put great effort into embedding Aboriginal knowledge and worldviews in the curriculum in authentic, meaningful ways.
  - References to Aboriginal knowledge and worldviews are both explicit and implicit in the redesigned curricula and are evident in the rationale statements, goals, learning standards and in some of the elaborations.
  - In some areas of learning, explicit Aboriginal content is included (e.g., information about residential schools in Social Studies; Aboriginal peoples' uses of indigenous plants and animals, or their knowledge of the sky and landscape, in Science). In other areas, there are opportunities to learn about Aboriginal people in the local community, for example, or Aboriginal literature.
  - From Kindergarten to graduation, students will experience Aboriginal perspectives and understandings as an integrated part of what they are learning.

## Who was involved in the redesign of the curriculum?

- BC teachers, academic experts, and school district staff have participated directly in the redesign of provincial curriculum. The BC Teachers Federation (BCTF) has played a significant role in this work. Teachers from the Federation of Independent Schools Association and the First Nations Schools Association also participated in the development work, as well as the Yukon Department of Education and Yukon teachers.
- Many parents, teachers, and individuals and groups from the public and industry provided feedback on the new K–9 curriculum, using the ministry website, email, and other methods of communication to express their views and suggest improvements.
- More details on the curriculum development process can be found at [curriculum.gov.bc.ca/sites/curriculum.gov.bc.ca/files/pdf/curriculum\\_development\\_process.pdf](http://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/sites/curriculum.gov.bc.ca/files/pdf/curriculum_development_process.pdf).

## What are the implementation timelines?

- K–9 curriculum is available for voluntary use by teachers in the 2015/16 school year. It will become the official curriculum in the 2016/17 school year.
- Grade 10–12 curriculum will be available for voluntary use in the 2016/17 school year. It will become the official curriculum in the 2017/18 school year.

## Will assessment, evaluation, and reporting be changing?

- Assessment and reporting methods will need to align with changing emphases in curriculum, such as the assessment of complex thinking skills.
- Through consultation with the field, the Ministry of Education will redesign assessment and reporting (communicating student learning) requirements to align with the other transformation efforts underway in BC. More information will be forthcoming regarding these consultations during the 2015/16 school year, with the goal of having new guidelines and policies in place by the 2016/17 school year.

## What materials or other resources will support the redesigned curriculum?

- Instructional examples and materials developed by teachers will be added to the website. Instructional examples may include instructional and assessment strategies, demonstrations of learning, inquiries, and interdisciplinary ideas. Website links to existing key resource materials will also be added.
- The BCTF [TeachBC](#) website will also host BC teaching resources.

## When will changes to the graduation learning years be determined?

- The Grades 10–12 curriculum proposals, posted in August 2015 for review and feedback, will form a first step toward discussions of new requirements for the graduation learning years. The design and structure of the Grades 10–12 curriculum will be the same as for the K–9 curriculum.
- The Advisory Group on Provincial Assessment will inform directions for provincial examinations.
- Provincial examinations will be redesigned with the changing emphases in curriculum. Development and piloting will occur over the next two school years.
- Changes to credentialing, reporting, transcripts, and other aspects of the graduation learning years will also be determined over the next two school years.