



Information Package

Music is one way for young people to connect with themselves;
it is also a bridge for connecting with others.

Through music, we can introduce children to the richness
and diversity of the human family and to the myriad rhythms of life.

Daniel A. Carp, Eastman Kodak Company Chairman and CEO.

Please register at: www.saveourfinearts.ca

Alberta Learning (Alberta Government) will be introducing a new proposed framework for Arts Education (music, drama, dance, visual arts) in Alberta over the next few years.

The main purpose of the changes is to reduce the overall cost of education. Alberta's Kindergarten to Grade 12 education system accounts for 17 percent of the overall provincial budget. According to Susan McLeod, Curriculum Manager for Arts Education at *Alberta Learning*, "...the revision process for curriculum is not immune to current economic reality. Indeed, all departments in Alberta Education have been affected by economic realities. Arts Education is no exception."

Are you concerned about the changes the Alberta Government is considering? Are you interested in becoming more informed? Are you willing to join a "Call to Action" with hundreds of other concerned parents, students, educators, entertainers, and arts industry executive?

If so, please consider the following:

- Check out our www.saveourfinearts.ca website for more information, and register to become part of our "Call to Action".
- Check out the **Facebook** site called "**Petition Against New Alberta Fine Arts Curriculum.**" High School students in Calgary set up this site to keep others informed and they have over 3,800 followers
- We are very hopeful that parents and students will be a strong voice in the city-wide, in fact provincial, campaign that will follow. We encourage you to pass this information along to other interested parties. These could be members of the community, artists of all kinds, parents in other schools, parents of students who are pursuing other fine arts programs. Please provide them the link above and encourage them to register as well. This way, they will also be kept informed of proposed changes.

If you have any questions regarding the above, please send an email to saveourfinearts@gmail.com. One of our *SOFA (Save Our Fine Arts)* Committee will respond.

FACT SHEET

PROPOSED K-12 ARTS EDUCATION CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

In June 2009, Alberta Learning released a draft framework for changes to the fine arts curriculum in Alberta. The following changes were recommended:

Change of program name from 'Fine Arts Programs' to Arts Education to better reflect the concept of learning in, through and about the arts.

In grades K-6, the proposed curriculum

- would provide students with a wide range of artistic experiences
- would be taught by both generalists and specialists
- would integrate arts into other subjects
- would be implemented in schools by 2012

In grades 7-9, the proposed curriculum

- would offer two arts 'tracks'. The Arts Education Exploration track would offer students *some* experience in a variety of art forms. The Arts Education Focus track would provide students with an in-depth experience in one particular art form (music, visual art, dance or drama)
- All junior high arts programs would have flexible entry points.
- would be implemented in schools by 2013

In grades 10-12, the proposed curriculum

- will offer opportunities for specialized learning through a variety of 1-credit (25 hour) courses in dance, drama, music and visual art.
- will allow students the opportunity to explore and experience the arts in a tight timetable
- will allow students to choose Arts Education Project courses to extend their learning in a particular arts discipline
- according to new information, the new 1-credit courses may not necessarily mean the end of current 3-5 credit (125 hour) courses. This is to be determined in consultation with stakeholders
- some courses will offer flexible entry points.
- pre-requisites, co-requisites and course sequences are also to be determined.
- would be implemented in schools by 2014

Public responses are due to Alberta Learning by January 31, 2010

The government has indicated it will consider suggestions, questions and comments about the proposed curriculum.

Please see the attached information on how to respond

Concerns about the proposed Curriculum changes:

- Seems to advocate generalists as opposed to specialists at elementary level, should advocate for specialists wherever possible.
- Generalists often uncomfortable with teaching fine arts disciplines, may water down arts experiences to a sampling of the arts, rather than real skills development.
- Fine arts do not lend themselves to dabbling, and the development of skill sets and appreciation takes time. A modular approach may provide only a token sampling of the arts experience.
- Flexible entry points may not provide necessary sequential learning for success, and for entry into post-secondary arts programs.
- Multiple entry points with no pre-requisites will make effectively teaching students at widely varying levels of experience difficult or impossible.
- Fine arts require a sequential, ongoing curriculum to attain high level skills.
- Appears to take an academic approach to music, and not necessarily a performance based approach.
- Alberta Education is suggesting offering exploratory courses, yet resources; teachers are not available to do so.
- It is unclear what will happen to performing ensembles in music programs.
- It is unclear what will happen to Locally Developed Courses (courses designed by school boards to meet unique needs within their schools)
- The intrinsic value of arts education will be lost if integrated into other subjects and used simply for academic gains.

Positive aspects of the Proposed Curriculum changes:

- Greater access to arts programming for students living in rural school districts.
- Option for students to explore interests, possibly develop a new passion.
- Greater appreciation and support for the arts, creating broader audiences for concerts, plays, ballet, arts shows, etc, resulting in stronger financial support.
- Provincial dance program will be developed under new curriculum due to demand.
- Students involved in arts tend to stay in school and achieve success due to participation.
- Modular courses may be therapeutic benefits for students unable to cope with full arts courses.
- Wider development of appreciation for the arts, and of creativity and thinking skills as vital job skills.

Who to contact to raise your concerns about changes to the Alberta Fine Arts Curriculum:

susan.mcleod@gov.ab.ca
wesley.oginski@gov.ab.ca
sean.yam@gov.ab.ca
keray.henke@gov.ab.ca
dave.hancock@gov.ab.ca
premier@gov.ab.ca

Also, please go to this website and choose your appropriate MLA.
<http://www.foundlocally.com/Calgary/Local/Gov-Provincial.htm>

- Your school principal
- Your school board trustee

Websites: www.saveourfinearts.ca

Facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/inbox/?ref=mb#/group.php?gid=178897880784>
Ab Ed Proposal Link - <http://education.alberta.ca/teachers/program/finearts/program-updates.aspx>

Calgary Herald Submissions:

To submit to the Calgary Herald Op-Ed Page:

1. Keep your letter to 250 words or less. You may be edited.
2. Include your full name, address and phone number
3. Submit:
 - by mail to Letters Editor, Calgary Herald, P.O. Box 2400, Stn M Calgary AB T2P 0W8
 - by fax to 403-235-7379
 - by e-mail to Letters@theherald.canwest.com

Sample Letter

This is an example of a letter requesting more information. Please write your own letter, or feel free to use all or part of this version to address your concerns to Alberta Learning or your MLA.

Your Name
Address,
Calgary, AB
Postal Code

To whom it may concern,

My name is NAME HERE and I am a PARENT/STUDENT at SCHOOL. I am writing to share my concerns about the K-12 Arts Education Curriculum Framework June 2009 draft.

Although this draft was made public In June, I do not believe that it was publicized well enough to the appropriate stakeholders, as it has only very recently come to my attention.

After reading through the draft, I have a number of concerns that I feel need to be addressed. The first of these is that the draft in question is very general and the direction in which the proposal is heading is vague and unclear. Furthermore, the aims set in the draft document do not match the proposed changes in curriculum.

Second, in the K-12 Arts Education Curriculum Consultation Report, part of the document reflects on the challenges that are being faced within the fine arts program. As a part of the fine arts program, I can understand what these challenges are. My concern is that the proposed draft shows no clear signs of fixing these challenges. In addition, the draft lacks to explain how these challenges are being addressed.

Lastly, there is no level of detail in the draft, and no curriculum to reference. This is where the difficulty lays in responding with constructive and informed feedback, as the detail is not adequate to respond constructively to. From the information I can gather from the draft, I see a number of potential challenges that will be faced if the proposal were to go through. These challenges would lead to negative consequences in the arts

As a stakeholder directly affected by these changes, I am requesting a more informative, more detailed draft with a clear and in depth proposal. I would also like to inquire why these changes are being made. After that has been publicized to all appropriate stakeholders, I would like to see an extended deadline for feedback, with sufficient time for all stakeholders to reply. I hope to see a setup where I as a stakeholder can work with, and assist in the developing of a fully informed, fully representative plan for the arts curriculum in Alberta. With that, I ask for a response showing that you have read through and understand my concerns. I would also like to know what you can do to make sure my concerns are understood by the appropriate parties. I would also appreciate an email following up on your actions and what has been accomplished.

Thank you very much for your time. I look forward to hearing back from you presently.

YOUR NAME HERE

Prepared by: **SOFA Organizing Committee**
November 9th, 2009

Letter/Email Writing Tips

Letters don't have to be long or fancy; ideally, they shouldn't be longer than one page.

The basic format includes:

- Your own address
- The date
- The name, title and address of the person to whom you are writing
- Salutation "Dear Mr/Mrs/Ms" or if a cabinet minister – The Honourable Dave Hancock, Minister of Education
- First paragraph—the purpose of the letter
- Second paragraph—the situation and the facts
- Third paragraph—what you would like done about it
- Closing—"Yours truly" or "Yours sincerely"
- Your signature
- Your typewritten name
- Your telephone number.

Letter writing tips:

- Write the letter in your own words and use information with which you are familiar – you don't have to be an expert. You are demonstrating your concern.
- Avoid form letters if possible. Each letter should express the writer's own opinions. Form letters receive form replies.
- If you are using a form letter, add your own thoughts to personalize it.
- Avoid inflammatory remarks, be polite, don't threaten and avoid hyperbole. This approach will weaken your credibility. Think about how you would feel in the recipient's position and how you might respond.
- Commend as well as criticize (for example, thank Alberta Education for being responsive and extending the deadline and/or acknowledging that the framework needs to be reworked).
- Try to suggest solutions or include the action you would like the recipient to take. If you ask questions, or request clarification on unclear facts, the recipient of your letter will be more inclined to send a prompt response. Try to limit your concerns to addressing two to three issues.

E-mail:

- Follow guidelines outlined in letter writing. Consider keeping your message short and recording when you sent it—such documentation might prove useful at some future date.
- As with written correspondence, if you do not provide contact information (including a complete "snail mail" address), you may not get a response.

Excerpted from the ATA handbook, *Advocacy: A Practical Guide*
<http://www.teachers.ab.ca/ADVOCACY%20AND%20ACTION/Pages/Advocacy%20A%20Practical%20Guide.asp>

Adapted from *The Art of Advocacy: A Handbook for Non-Profit Organizations* <http://www.ccednet-rcdec.ca/files/AdvocacyHandbook-FIN2.pdf>

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