

Special SOFA Meeting February 01, 2010
Lutheran Church
7 – 9 pm

Agenda

1. Welcome by Bill Campbell Co Chair
2. Update
3. Presentation by Alberta Education
4. Questions

2) Who is SOFA? Save Our Fine Arts, A group of parents, educators and students who are passionate about the fine arts in schools.

SOFA call to action strategy, our website was started in November, we have had 35,000 hits and 77 new visitors a day. 43% of those who have signed up on our website are students, registrants are from around Alberta, the US and even England.

SOFA was started by music parents in response to the Alberta Education framework proposed changes.

Areas of concern: Lyle Bennett Co Chair

Concerns about spiral learning and lack of reference to sequential learning. Concerns that there will no longer be specialists.

3) Joan Engel, Alberta Education

Thank you to Lyle.

What we've heard from everyone is that more clarification is required around the intent of the framework and need for new programs. There needs to be more thinking around the proposed structure.

The first 10 pages appear positive. Why are we going with a framework? What's wrong with the fine arts?

This has been in the works for a number of years. For example in dance it would be nice to have a provincial program. We want to raise awareness about arts education.

There is no argument that more thinking is needed. We wanted to raise awareness around the arts curriculum as well.

Roles and responsibilities – staffing is under the school jurisdiction, support for implementation is shared.

1 Credit courses – opportunities and challenges: there were about 600 online document discussions and hundreds of thousands of letters. We heard you, we know this proposed structure is not one we will probably, won't even say probably, follow. We did hear.

The new framework talks about skill development, Scope and sequence, these were developed as part of programs of study.

Role of locally developed courses – they are locally developed by schools to meet the needs of students, there are 2200 at senior high level across the province.

There are lots of opportunities, 1/3 is in the area of the arts 15, 25 and 35, these are not offered across the province.

The framework is for 10, 20 and 30.

Local school authorities are responsible for the LDC's, and cannot overlap with the provincially taught courses.

There was a question as to whether arts education would be mandatory past the elementary level.

In this province choice is highly valued so we don't know yet. The impact of anything becoming mandatory needs to be seriously looked at.

Lots of learning has taken place since the framework draft was released, we need to consult, collaborate and communicate. People had not known about the framework, there are plans to have opportunities to become involved and see the materials.

1. REVIEW 2. INITIATE 3. PLAN 4. DEVELOP 5. IMPLEMENT 6: MAINTAIN
Arts Education
Is here

This is a continuous circle.

The first step as promised is to revise the framework we have a good sense on how to move forward.

Any changes will be implemented in 2014 for K-6, 2015 Grades 7-9, 2016 Grades 10-12

There will be opportunities for stake holders input.

In March 2010 we will issue a "what we heard" report. March – May 2010 framework revisions, May - June 2010 validation of revised framework, Sep 2010 initiation of work on programs of study.

Education.alberta.ca/teachers/program/finearts/program-update.apax

We want to involve post secondary institutes, encourage them to be a part of the teacher evaluation programs.

Question: If programs are diluted before they get to senior high level will the students be qualified to enter the programs?

We don't want the programs to be diluted, we want opportunities for all students, we are concerned about that.

Question: Can the fine arts be mandated or a core subject?

Alberta Education is not mandating a 2nd language so we are not mandating fine arts either.

Question: Why are so many fine arts courses delivered by the LDC method rather than being a part of the regular course of study?

We need to address this provincially as there are some incredible courses.

Question: Would some of the LDC courses become a part of provincial curriculum?

It won't make sense to take them all over. We need to look at the best that is out there.

Question: the LDC is being re-evaluated, will some of the current fine arts courses no longer be offered?

The process is being put on line. Review of LDC's would not be touched until deemed in the new curriculum to overlap.

Arts exploration as opposed to arts focus, we need to revisit this, we want to expand opportunities to those who would not otherwise have the programs.

We cannot deal quickly with making the arts mandated or mandatory. We need to look at the impact on students. What would that look like? We want students to be motivated by the right things, it's on the table.

Question: Elementary level does not have enough specialists, the framework erodes this further, how can your curriculum encourage school boards to hire specialists?

Teachers are teachers.

High school teacher: arts operates on a different level, music requires a great deal of technique.

J.E. reply: programs will involve skill development, there are some amazing programs.

Question: When a teacher in a school is teaching music but knows nothing about music how do you address that?

J.E: We are doing programs of study for all children, there is a challenge there. Everyone can teach grade 4 math, just got to have the passion and the expertise

Question: Alberta Education says there will be no cutbacks but we hear otherwise.

J.E. LDC's are C.E.U's, not sure why CBE would cut the courses as the courses students take gives CBE the funding.

Question: Do we have the finances to support our vision? Where do you find money for the arts?

J.E. There is a commitment to move forward, there may be more we can do. The revised framework is not a way of looking at budget cuts.

Parent comment: Economics are what they are. You have to go with your voice, bring it forward, be the loudest group.

It boils down to dollars and cents.

J.E. Arts is alive, we are looking at currently what is there. Part of it is fixing and updating. Dance is very much alive in the LDC program.

Teacher: You say the program is outdated. I question your reasons for changing, the music program is excellent, just needs tweaking with regard to technology. Do the people who are making these decisions know what they are talking about?

Parent: Music may not be out dated but art, drama and dance are outdated.

Question: Do you have a background in the arts?

J.E. No, we have no intent in making the changes, we are the managers, we will bring in the people who are experts in those areas.

Teacher: I don't have a clue who has been involved in this framework, we need someone who understands the programs.

J.E. We will bring in those with expertise who know their area.

Teacher: The right people need to write the curriculum.

J.E. We have to balance out what we heard. We will be using people who are very much qualified.

Teachers can become involved by contacting their superintendant.

Parent: You cannot make the arts mandatory.

J.E. Arts is mandatory in K-6.

Thanks very much to Joan Engel and her team for coming tonight to talk to us and answer questions and concerns.

We need a fine arts show case in Calgary with participation from music, drama, visual arts and dance students.

We need to continue to build momentum and need to look for future opportunities.

A number of key positions are still available, please sign up to help if you have not done so already.

Thank you to everyone for coming tonight.

For those on the SOFA committee we will have a meeting on February 22.