

Ministry of Education
Questions and Answers
New Curriculum, Assessment, Reporting and Graduation

HOW AND WHAT WILL STUDENTS LEARN?

Q: What is BC's new curriculum?

The world is changing, and it is our duty to make sure kids are ready to succeed in that changing world. That is why we are bringing in a new curriculum in BC schools.

We are entering year two of the three-year introduction of new curriculum in BC. The new curriculum maps out what teachers teach and what students are expected to learn. Students will learn the basics of reading, writing and math skills in a way that connects them with the collaboration, critical thinking, and communications skills they will need to succeed after high school.

The new curriculum also responds to concerns from teachers about the old, inflexible curriculum. The new curriculum is focused 100 per cent on students and will prepare students for success through personalized learning. The graduation program and assessment changes will be closely aligned with the new curriculum.

When will we be able to see the Grade 10-12 curriculum?

New Kindergarten to Grade 9 (K-9) curriculum in draft form has been available for teachers on a trial basis this year, before being fully implemented this coming fall.

Early drafts of the Grade 10 to 12 curriculum are posted online (curriculum.gov.bc.ca) for teacher feedback. Revised Grade 10 to 12 curriculum will be available this summer. Teachers in Grades 10-12 (the graduation program) will have an opportunity in the upcoming 2016/17 school year to familiarize themselves with the redesigned curriculum, just as Grade K-9 teachers had this school year.

By 2017-18 the entire Grade K-12 curriculum will be used throughout the province.

Q. Will these changes affect what courses are available for my child?

Students will continue to have the flexibility to include dual credit, work experience, advanced placement courses, international baccalaureate courses, board authorized approved courses, distributed learning courses and apprenticeship programs that support these strategies.

Q. How have teachers contributed to these changes?

Significant public consultation has been done and hundreds of teachers and educators have played a very significant leadership role in the development of these changes. Teachers helped create the new curriculum and they like the curriculum's focus on big ideas and competencies. They also helped to incorporate much needed Aboriginal content into the curriculum. They strongly support aligning the new curriculum with new ways of assessing student progress.

Finally, teachers will have the freedom to move away from the ‘all students will be assessed in the same way on the same day’ one-size-fits-all approach.

Q. How much input has government received in developing these changes?

Since 2012, the Ministry has held consultations throughout the province with thousands of education partners, to help guide and inform proposed directions on these changes.

The Ministry has consulted widely with education sector representatives, post-secondary institutions, business, First Nations, municipal representatives, parents, students and employers.

Nearly 5,000 public comments were received during a nine-month engagement process and more than 200 BC teachers have been involved in the redesign of curriculum and competencies.

Consultation and ongoing conversations with education partners will continue as the changes are implemented in the classroom.

HOW WILL WE MEASURE SUCCESS?

Q: How are you assessing students?

As the new curriculum is phased in over the next three years, how students are assessed is changing as well. It will remain focused on ensuring all students have good literacy skills and are proficient in math. There will be more focus on classroom assessment as it most accurately represents student’s ongoing achievement, and can reflect learning that is flexible and personalized.

Teachers will have more range to create innovative learning opportunities and greater flexibility to decide how and when students are assessed.

As well, secondary students will write a math skills and literacy assessment instead of the five provincial exams they have traditionally written. While students will still write some tests, there will be an increased focus on a teacher’s classroom assessment of individual student progress.

Q. Do these changes lower education standards?

We are modernizing standards, not lowering them. Assessments, whether in the classroom or provincially administered assessments, will remain rigorous.

Q. How will the math skills and literacy assessments differ from math and language arts exams in place now?

They will be similar. However, there will be more focus on understanding and applying math and language arts skills in a variety of real life contexts.

REPORT CARDS

Q: Will students still be issued report cards?

Yes, report cards will still go out. But to better ensure that students are invested and engaged in their own learning, there will be an increased focus on creating an ongoing dialogue about learning between the student, teacher and parent.

The goal is for parents to have a deeper understanding of their child's progress through relevant, timely information about how their child is doing, rather than just relying on report cards alone or having infrequent parent/teacher meetings.

The new reporting structure is designed to better meet the needs of parents, students and teachers, like the new curriculum itself, it is more flexible and adaptable to the individual needs of the student.

Starting next month and continuing through October 2016, we will be asking parents for input on what they want to know about their child's progress and how they want to get that information.

HOW WILL THE NEW CURRICULUM PREPARE STUDENTS FOR THE FUTURE?

Q: Is the graduation program changing too?

Yes. With redesigned curriculum, assessment and reporting practices being implemented the final step is to make sure that the graduation program continues to set students up for success. The graduation program will still span Grades 10, 11 and 12 but a student's path to a high school diploma may be more varied and flexible than before.

Q: How many credits will students need?

All students will still need 80 credits to graduate – 52 from required courses and 28 from electives. That has not changed.

Q. Are any new courses being introduced?

Yes. Starting in the 2017/18 school year, Career Education courses will replace Planning 10 and Grad Transitions, and will be required.

Q. Taken together, do these changes just make it easier for students to graduate?

We are not making the path to graduation easier – just more flexible. Teachers will be able to give students more credit for getting real-life experiences outside the classroom in business and in the community.

Students will be able to explore skills and trades opportunities on their path to graduate. To reflect the personalized learning focus of the new curriculum, students will be given more freedom to explore their interests and passions as they work toward graduation.

The reality is that, in a changing world, parents expect us to make sure kids have the skills they need to succeed. New curriculum, assessment, reporting and graduation all support the skills that students need to succeed today – before and after graduation. Skills like critical thinking, communication and collaboration are the kinds of skills employers are looking for.

Q. How will this impact my child’s future post-secondary admission?

Post-secondary institutions have been very involved with these changes.

The key provincial assessment that has always been used for entry into BC post-secondary institutions is a Language Arts 12 assessment. Post-secondary institutions do not have concerns about discontinuing Social Studies and Science examinations, as they are not used for entry into post-secondary.

Admission to post-secondary institutions is based on the final grade achieved in a Grade 11 or 12 course. This is not changing.

Q: Will there be changes to the Adult Dogwood (adult graduation), or others?

Adult graduation program requirements remain the same. Adult learners who have not yet graduated can earn credits towards either the BC Adult Graduation Diploma (Adult Dogwood) or a regular BC Dogwood Diploma.

Students will still have multiple pathways to successfully complete their Grade K-12 education:

- Adult Dogwood
- Dogwood Diploma
- Diplôme de fin d'études secondaires en Colombie-Britannique
- Evergreen Certificate where appropriate based on Individual Education Plan

Q. How do these changes affect French language courses and exams?

Français langue première 10, Français langue première 12 and Français langue seconde immersion 12 changes will be the same as their equivalents in English.

Q: Will the changes affect the Scholarship Program?

No, the Scholarship Program remains the same.

Q. What if my child is struggling in school?

Nothing has changed, and teachers are there to help students. In fact, the new curriculum with its focus on tapping into the passions of each student, will help them take a deeper interest in what they are learning – a building block of success.

The way a student learns and how they are assessed can be tailored to build on their strengths and support their challenges.