

Part 2: Social Studies, History and Geography – Findings From the Review

This presentation will focus on the findings of the review process, highlighting specific strengths and recommendations.

So, why the changes? The changes are a result of asking the question: What will the learner of 2022 need?

The changes are in line with government priorities, initiatives, and reports such as Healthy Schools, Safe Schools Action Team – Shaping a Culture of Respect in Our Schools, Promoting Safe and Healthy Relationships, Equity and Inclusive Education Policy, Acting Today, Shaping Tomorrow – Policy Framework for Environmental Education, First Nation, Métis and Inuit Policy Framework, Learning for All, English Language Learners Policies and Procedures, A Sound Investment: Financial Literacy Education in Ontario Schools as well as character education, student success, safe schools, and Stepping Stones. It was also a result of research and stakeholder feedback that supported to recommendations.

But it was not all about change. In fact, there were many strengths pointed out about the existing social studies, history and geography and Canadian and world studies curriculum. There were many aspects of the curriculum that already aligned with 21st century learning skills. The promotion of critical thinking, inquiry, and communication skills were already a part of the curriculum. What they needed were to be tweaked, strengthened, and made explicit.

These curriculum documents and the included subject areas already allowed for the embedding of many Ministry of Education initiatives including First Nation, Métis and Inuit Policy Framework, the environmental education, financial literacy education, and equity and inclusive education.

Specific strengths that were highlighted for the current social studies, history and geography curriculum was the emphasis on inclusion and diversity in a changing society and responsible citizenship. The introduction of the disciplines of history and geography in grade 7 and 8 were also seen as a strength. The revised curriculum builds on these strengths.

Some of the key recommendations were around the need to strengthen the place of critical thinking so that it is within all grades and strands. It was also recommended that inquiry needs to be part of the curriculum again within all grades and strands. While both of these items existed within the current document they needed to be more explicit and tied to the development of 21st century learning and skills.

One recommendation we received repeatedly was to go from a generic set of fundamental concepts and move towards discipline specific concepts that revolved around the processes of thinking within each discipline.

It was also important to align the French- language and English- language documents more closely.

Other recommendations were around the creation of an overview page for each grade and/or course.

We often heard ideas around the need to revise the progression of topics and themes in the elementary curriculum and the compulsory courses in the secondary curriculum.

We also heard many recommendations around the inclusion of citizenship within the curriculum, not just in one or two grades or courses but embedded within each grade and course of the social studies; history and geography and Canadian and world studies curriculum.

Some specific recommendations that were heard around social studies, history and geography were that it would help teachers for planning if the document was aligned by grade, not strand, and if in Grades 7 and 8 History and Geography there was a reduction in the topics that were to be covered.

It was also recommended that social history be strengthened in order to allow for the inclusion of more diverse perspectives within the learning of Canadian History. With that recommendation came the idea of including more social issues and stronger skill development.