

Where's the queer content?

Despite Corren agreement, BC curriculum review so far silent

EDUCATION
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Gay educators in BC are concerned that the Ministry of Education's curriculum overhaul contains few specifics on the inclusion of mandatory queer content.

The ministry has so far posted curriculum drafts for English, math, science and social studies. Drafts for more areas are expected to be posted in the coming weeks. The drafts, which were produced by educators, move the focus

from relaying facts to larger concepts or "big ideas."

"The idea is for it to be a bit more conceptual and less specific so schools and students can pursue things of interest to their communities," says BC Teachers' Federation vice-president Glen Hansman. "We have been pushing for this, but at the same time we can't lose the pieces around diversity that we fought so hard to include."

"The indication from ministry staff is that they'd preserve references that are there according to the Corren agree-

ment, as well as the commitment to the First Nations authorities," Hansman says.

In 1999 Peter and Murray Corren filed a human rights complaint against the Ministry of Education for omitting queer people from BC's curriculum. They argued that the failure to include information about LGBT people amounted to systemic discrimination. The case was settled in 2006 when the government acknowledged the absence, introduced an elective social-justice course, and promised to flag

areas where queer content could be introduced during its regular curriculum reviews.

Hansman points to Ontario's new social studies curriculum, which stipulates that Grade 2 students should be able to "identify and describe different types of families." Several examples, including same-sex families, are listed, as well as hypothetical conversation topics, including one on same-sex families that reads, "I have my dad and my stepdad. My stepdad has other kids too."

BC's curriculum draft for social studies mentions that students "will know and understand," among other things, the "ways in which individuals and families differ" but fails to elaborate on diverse family models.

Myriam Dumont, a Vancouver elementary school teacher and a member of the Pride Education Network, is concerned about some aspects of the "generalized nature" of the drafts so far.

"The unfortunate thing with that is when things aren't specifically outlined for teachers, there's the opportunity for really important things to be left out, including anti-homophobia and anti-transphobia education," she says, "as well as things at the primary levels like diverse families, which includes same-sex families."

A ministry spokesperson notes that the curriculum is in draft form and still needs to go through a variety of lenses before the final product goes forward.

"At this point right now, with stuff



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Queer content should be embedded in the curriculum, Glen Hansman says, so kids can see themselves reflected in learning materials. FACEBOOK.COM

going through the draft form, I can't tell you one way or another what's going to be in the final cut, but the direction it's going in suggests it will most likely include terms such as sexual orientation in the new curriculum, as they do right now.” **X**

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