



# BCTF Research Report

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## 2019 BCTF Curriculum Change and Implementation Survey

**T**his report summarizes results from the 2019 BCTF Curriculum Change and Implementation Survey. The results illustrate that teachers in BC continue to lack access to the necessary resources, time and support for curriculum implementation. The results are discussed in relation to three conditions necessary for teacher-led curriculum change:

1. time and space for curriculum as an ongoing conversation
2. educational systems and structures that support curricular demands
3. a flexible, adaptable and fully resourced implementation process.

Ten years after the “transformation” of curriculum in BC began, these conditions are far from being met. Failing to meet these conditions has resulted in uneven implementation across the province, increasing workload and frustration for many teachers as they try to meet the needs of all students in their classroom.

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## The state of teacher-led curriculum change in British Columbia

British Columbia is in an intensified period of curriculum change that is taking place on an unprecedented scale. Conceptualized in 2010, the redesigned curriculum has been phased-in, with teachers implementing the redesigned curriculum in 2016 (K–9), 2018 (Grade 10) and 2019 (Grades 11–12).

Throughout this process, the BCTF has actively gathered feedback related to the redesigned curriculum. While members have diverse perspectives and experiences, feedback has consistently highlighted shared concerns. It has also exposed a crucial gap in understanding the process of curriculum change from teachers' perspectives. To address this gap, the BCTF Research Department is leading a multiyear research conversation on teacher-led curriculum change in BC.

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We understand **curriculum** as a contested, relational, and situated practice (Chambers, 2012; Kanu, 2012; Pinar, 2015).

**Curriculum change**, refers to both explicit and implicit shifts within a historical moment as to what is taught (e.g. curricular content) as well as how teaching happens (e.g. increasing reliance on technologies).

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As part of this work, BCTF Research conducted an initial survey on curriculum change and implementation in 2017 (BCTF, 2017). The survey aimed to begin to develop a deeper understanding of the state of curriculum change across the province and shape the BCTF's priorities for supporting members in relation to curriculum change. The survey results illustrated that what was urgently needed is a shift from whether teachers are ("correctly") implementing the curriculum, to whether the *curriculum* is providing space for the multiple knowledges, experiences and needs that make up teaching and learning in BC.

Based on these results, BCTF Research proposed three conditions necessary to foster a teacher-led process of curriculum change. These conditions are:

1. time and space for curriculum as an ongoing conversation
2. educational systems and structures that support curricular demands
3. a flexible, adaptable, and fully resourced implementation process.

The *2019 BCTF Curriculum Change and Implementation Survey* provides a snapshot of the extent to which these conditions are being met across the province.

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## 2019 Survey: Methodology

The 2019 BCTF Curriculum Change and Implementation Survey invited members to share their experiences implementing BC's redesigned curriculum in their classrooms and schools. BCTF Research developed the survey objectives and questionnaire drawing on the results of the 2017 BCTF Curriculum Change and Implementation Survey. Of particular interest was to what extent the three conditions to foster a teacher-led process, as proposed from the 2017 survey, are being met.

To gather data, two sampling techniques were used. In both cases, participants completed the survey on the SimpleSurvey platform. All responses were anonymous and confidential, and participants' IP addresses or other identifying details were not collected or made available to the researchers, the BCTF, or any other persons or organizations. The online survey results are stored on a Canadian server. Both sampling methods allowed participants to leave detailed comments. Comments were coded using MaxQDA, a qualitative data analysis software.

The two sampling techniques were:

1. **Random Sample:**

600 members were randomly selected from the database of 40,899 active members. Potential participants received an email with a personal link to complete the survey on the SimpleSurvey platform, and BCTF research staff followed up with potential participants via email and phone. The survey had a response rate of 33%, giving a confidence interval of  $\pm 7\%$ , 19 times out of 20. This report presents statistics based on the random sample data.

2. **Census of all active BCTF members:**

All active members received an email with the survey description and a link to the census version of the survey. The survey was also promoted through BCTF News. 2,841 teachers completed the census survey. Data from this version of the survey has been used to explore trends within particular sub-groups, such as respondents by grade level or years of teaching experience.

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### Participants:

- Come from 48 districts, with the most participants from Surrey (10%), Vancouver (8%) and North Vancouver (6%)
  - Represent classroom teachers (74%) as well as positions such as specialist teacher (21%) and teachers teaching on call (11%)
  - Taught Kindergarten to Grade 9 (89%) with all subject areas represented
  - Taught grade 10–12 (39%) with all subject areas represented except French Language and French Immersion
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## Curricular condition 1: Time and space for curriculum as an ongoing conversation

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“Our school is very collaborative. I believe that this is the ‘key’ piece to this new curriculum. Collaboration builds confidence.”

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Engaging curriculum as an ongoing conversation invites teachers to work together to discuss and debate the question of “what knowledge is of most worth” (Pinar, 2015, p. 15). This is not a one-off event. It is a process in which teachers need time to explore their answers in terms of the curricular framework, their pedagogical practice and decisions, and the students who are in their classrooms. BC education partners have agreed that curriculum change is an “ongoing process built around reflective practice supported by all learning partners” (BCTF, BC Ministry of Education, BCSSA, & bcpvpa, n.d.). This includes how teachers navigate curriculum change while upholding their right to use their professional judgement in relation to their pedagogical practice and decisions.

Most teachers (76%) feel that their school leadership sees curriculum change as an ongoing process. However, only a third (34%) report that there are formal opportunities to discuss the process of curriculum change with colleagues. This points to a potential disconnect between the stated intention that curriculum change is a process, and the deliberate creation of time and space for this process to unfold.

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“The redesigned curriculum was a huge shift in thinking. There are no resources in our school to support these changes and no money to purchase resources. In previous years, teachers were able to meet in district grade groups and share, but this has not happened.”

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Opportunities to engage with the curriculum are important when exploring use of the curriculum in relation to teachers’ *level of support for and perspectives* on the curricular model. Roughly three quarters of K–12 teachers report that they are using the redesigned curriculum always (42%) or most of the time (31%), with no significant differences between K–9 and 10–12. Support for the redesigned curriculum is slightly lower than use, with two fifths of teachers reporting they are undecided (16%), only somewhat supportive (18%), or not at all supportive (5%) of the redesigned curriculum. There are no significant differences between K–9 and 10–12. In general, teachers with less teaching experience reported being more supportive of the redesigned curriculum, while teachers with more teaching experience reported lower levels of support. Overall, the total level of support is only slightly higher than what was reported in the 2017 survey, in which 50% of respondents were fully supportive or supportive.

Furthermore, there are different opinions as to which curriculum components are the most essential. Roughly three quarters of teachers consider the following components important or very important: inclusive (82%), competency-based (80%), knowledge/content-based (74%), and personalized (70%). Just over half (57%) consider inquiry-

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driven to be important or very important. In contrast, only one-third (34%) consider “technology-rich” to be important or very important.

There are also differences between the extent to which teachers feel the redesigned curriculum aligns with what students need from a primary or from a secondary education, with only half of teachers at a primary level (49%) and only 37% at a secondary level feeling the redesigned curriculum is completely or largely aligned with what their students need from their education.

This picture becomes even more complex when looking specifically at how the curriculum meets the needs of all students in the classroom. While the curriculum has been promoted as part of the province’s commitment to an inclusive education system,<sup>1</sup> less than half (46%) of teachers agree that the redesigned curriculum helps them to meet the diverse needs of students in their classroom.

To engage curriculum as an ongoing conversation, teachers need the time and space to continue to explicitly engage these issues and work collaboratively to shape localized curriculum that does meet the needs of all students.

## **Curricular condition 2: Educational systems and structures that support curricular demands**

Teaching and learning conditions are curricular conditions. In other words, teaching and learning conditions will fundamentally determine the direction that curriculum change takes. Working and learning conditions include:

- well-resourced schools and classrooms that meet the demands of the curriculum.
- respect for teachers’ autonomy to use their professional judgments to make curricular decisions.
- clear and reasonable assessment and reporting systems that are aligned with curriculum.

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“I also feel that the lack of supports makes learning in a more flexible environment very difficult for our more vulnerable students. Yes there are more entry points but where is the support to help all learners enter? A lot has been downloaded onto the teacher and I am burning out with the expectations and needs.”

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“My biggest hurdle each day is the technology needed to support students.”

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<sup>1</sup> See [curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/overview](http://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/overview)

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“I feel very strongly that current options for reporting and communicating student learning to parents is very misaligned with the redesigned curriculum. I would love to be able to make learning more visible and more accurately communicate the progress of my students in a more timely and effective manner.”

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- explicit attention to how the structure of schooling for both K–9 and 10–12 (e.g. timetables, graduation requirements) shape the direction of curriculum change.

Since 2010, the Ministry has failed to adequately resource curricular change. For many teachers, this means that they are responsible for implementing curriculum without access to the necessary resources to meet curricular demands. For example, when asked to rate their level of access to different resources, only roughly one-third of teachers rated their access as “good” or “very good” in any area. This included accessible and reliable access to technology (36%), current and relevant instructional materials (31%), or flexible learning spaces (27%).

A key ongoing challenge for teachers is the lack of alignment between the redesigned curriculum and assessment and reporting systems. For instance, the K–9 reporting order is still in a pilot phase<sup>2</sup> and there are no immediate plans to change the 10–12 reporting order.

At a primary and/or intermediate level:

- Only 39% of teachers feel that assessment and reporting are aligned with the redesigned curriculum.
- Less than half of teachers have received clear guidelines related to student assessment (38%), student self-assessment of the Core Competencies (39%), and/or student reporting (40%).
- Less than one-third of teachers (30%) have received adequate in-service and professional development on student self-assessment of the Core Competencies.

These challenges are even more stark at the secondary level:

- Only 32% of teachers feel that assessment and reporting are aligned with the redesigned curriculum.
- Only one-fourth of teachers feel that they have received clear guidelines related to student assessment (23%), student self-assessment of the Core Competencies (25%), and/or student reporting (23%).
- Only one-third (37%) of teachers have received clear guidelines related to graduation requirements.
- Less than one-fourth (23%) have received adequate in-service and professional development on student self-assessment of the Core Competencies.

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“We still have not seen literacy assessments, there is ever changing what assessments students will have to do. We have gotten almost nothing about the capstone, and there is no assessment guidelines for the new curriculum.”

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<sup>2</sup> See [curriculum.gov.bc.ca/assessment/classroom-assessment-and-reporting/student-reporting-policy-pilot](http://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/assessment/classroom-assessment-and-reporting/student-reporting-policy-pilot)

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Furthermore, what teachers perceive as necessary components of a graduation assessment and reporting system are not necessarily aligned with the framework of the redesigned curriculum. For instance, the redesigned curriculum focuses on proficiency scales for communicating student learning. However, a large percentage of secondary school teachers feel that letter grades (58%) and/or percentages (60%) are an important part of communicating student learning. Capstone projects, in contrast, are only seen as a key element of the graduation program by 31% of secondary school teachers. Less than half of teachers feel that literacy and numeracy assessments should be a part of graduation program assessment and reporting.<sup>3</sup>

Across all grade levels, these challenges are reflected in unreasonable teacher workloads. Only 19% of primary and/or intermediate teachers and 20% of secondary teachers feel that workload expectations for assessment and reporting are reasonable. This is also the area in which teachers feel they have the least professional autonomy. Almost half (46%) of teachers feel that they have no or limited professional autonomy in choosing reporting tools.

There is also a lack of alignment between curricular demands and the school structures that need to be in place to meet these demands. Collaboration on inquiry projects across teachers, for example, requires time and space to happen. However, less than half (44%) of teachers agree that the schedule and/or timetable at their school supports the implementation of the redesigned curriculum, and only 1 in 5 teachers (22%) feel that there is adequate time to collaborate with colleagues (planning or co-teaching, for instance). Furthermore, only 31% of teachers have good or very good access to in-service and professional development<sup>4</sup> opportunities related to the redesigned curriculum in their teaching area(s).

In the face of these multiple challenges, teachers continue to use their professional autonomy to best meet the needs of all children in their classroom. Most teachers feel they have a lot or full professional autonomy in determining curricular content in their classrooms (76%) and in their pedagogical practice and decisions (78%). While challenges remain, many teachers also feel they have a lot or full professional autonomy in their choice of appropriate technological tools (64%) and choice of student assessment approaches (68%).

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“So much time spent collecting data and documenting takes away from quality time in actual teaching and relationships with students.”

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<sup>3</sup> Percentage of teachers who agree that the following components should be a part of graduation program assessment and reporting: Grade 10 Graduation Literacy Assessment (36%); Grade 12 Graduation Literacy Assessment (45%); Grade 10 Graduation Numeracy Assessment (41%).

<sup>4</sup> In-service refers to specific training that is provided by the employer during working hours. Professional development refers to teacher-directed learning.



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## Curricular condition 3: A flexible, adaptable, and fully resourced implementation process

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“Resources are sorely lacking.”

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Ten years after the “transformation” of BC’s curriculum began, the Ministry has failed to provide a clear implementation plan or adequate funding to support implementation. A clearly differentiated curriculum implementation plan should address communication for different groups, school cultures, and teachers at different points in the process of implementation. There also needs to be a clear delineation between curriculum change and other changes.

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“I appreciate the focus on big ideas! However some competencies are too broad. More detail is needed. Please add samples/ visuals to help aid accurate assessment and consistency throughout the province.”

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The lack of a clear provincial plan will inevitably contribute to uneven experiences of how implementation is playing out at the school level. Roughly half (45%) of teachers feel that expectations related to curriculum change are clearly communicated, and 68% feel that they have flexibility as to when and how they implement the redesigned curriculum. The lack of instructional and other resources will also directly impact student learning. Only half (50%) of teachers feel that students have access to a wide range of classes and/or learning experiences.

Perhaps of most concern, only one-fourth (26%) of teachers have access to instructional samples that are appropriate for their local context. While access to resources is an issue across the curriculum, it is particularly acute in relation to new curricular areas, such as physical and health education.

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“I have spent countless hours at home researching, finding materials at the public library and the UBC library and making my own resources.”

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Teachers who previously taught physical education are now also responsible for teaching health-related topics. However, only roughly a third of teachers report that they feel ready and prepared to teach mental health topics (38%) or sexual health topics in a way that is relevant to the diversity of students in each class (37%). Feeling ready and prepared requires access to in-service or professional development opportunities related to these topics, opportunities that approximately 2 out of 3 teachers say they do not have access to.<sup>5</sup> It also requires access to necessary instructional materials or resources. For mental health topics, 34% of teachers say they have access to these materials or resources. For sexual health topics, it is 37%. There is also a gap in access to external community supports that could enrich teaching and learning in these areas. Only 22% of teachers feel they have access to external community supports related to mental health topics, and only 28% have access to supports related to sexual health topics.

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<sup>5</sup> Percentage of teachers who agree or strongly agree that they have access to these opportunities: 31% (sexual health topics) and 40% (mental health topics).



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The other new curricular area is Applied Design, Skills and Technology (ADST). Only 39% of teachers feel ready and prepared to teach topics related to ADST, and they do not have access to in-service opportunities that would support them in this area (only 31% report having access). Furthermore, for a curricular area that will often require specialized equipment and/or materials, only 29% of teachers report having access to the instructional materials, supplies, and/or equipment needed.

Perhaps the most significant shift in the redesigned curriculum is the focus on integrating Aboriginal perspectives. While teachers are broadly supportive of this focus, only two out of five teachers (39%) feel ready and prepared to do this work. As they work with the curriculum, many teachers (44%) are unaware of local protocols for accessing, using and interpreting Aboriginal knowledges, and less than half (47%) report that they have access to localized instructional materials needed to integrate Aboriginal perspectives into their teaching.

Overall, teachers remain divided on how ready and prepared they feel to implement the redesigned curriculum. Three years after the K–9 curriculum was finalized, only 62% of teachers say they are very (16%) or mostly (46%) prepared for implementation.

## Conclusion

Ten years into the “transformation” of education in BC, and three years after the redesigned curriculum began to be implemented, the necessary conditions for a teacher-led process of curriculum change are far from being met.

Failing to meet these conditions has resulted in uneven implementation across the province, increasing workload and frustration for many teachers as they try to meet the needs of all students in their classroom. Even teachers who are supportive of the redesigned curriculum feel these pressures. As one teacher stated:

**While I believe that the new curriculum is interesting and relevant, the workload required to change all topics in such a short period of time without extra planning time and resources has been overwhelming and exhausting.**

Overall, the results from the 2019 BCTF Curriculum Change and Implementation Survey illustrate that curriculum change is far from

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“[The curriculum] does not truly reflect Aboriginal knowledge and perspectives in a valued way especially as you move up in grades. Tends to still be one-sided (Eurocentric).”

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“My general impression is that there has been some really great thought put into it, but implementation of it has been vague, unclear and left us feeling unsupported.”

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“done.” In many ways, curriculum change is just beginning as teachers work with BC’s redesigned curriculum in the context of their schools and classrooms. In many ways, the challenges facing curriculum implementation make working towards the three essential conditions for a teacher-led process even more crucial. Now is the time to create space for curriculum as an ongoing conversation, to advocate for educational systems and structures that support curricular demands, and to hold the Ministry of Education accountable for a flexible, adaptable, and fully resourced implementation process.

## References

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