

THESA's Response to the Year 2000

The Teachers of Home Economics Specialist Association is a provincial specialist association of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation. This response represents a summary of the opinions of more than 500 THESA members. The comments/concerns of locals were compiled by chapter contacts who reported back to the executive. Responses were considered at a day-long meeting where nine THESA members representing Langley, Revelstoke, Victoria, Kamloops, Vancouver, Surrey, Maple Ridge, Invermere, and Burnaby School Districts analyzed the Year 2000 document in detail and compiled the following statements.

Concepts in the Year 2000 Document THESA strongly supports:

1. That the prime goal of public schools should be intellectual development (as stated on page 7).
2. New offerings at the graduate program that address the needs of students who will not be attending university.
3. The policy of gender equity. We encourage the enrollment of both males and females in home economics as well as other courses.
4. The need for recognition of the multicultural nature of B.C. in education policy and programs.
5. The notion that "People learn in a variety of ways and at different rates" (p. 10).
6. Common curriculum time of 80% so that 20% can be used for locally developed courses.
7. First Nations' culture as a part of the Common Curriculum.
8. The application of the attitudes and skills expressed in the Curriculum/Assessment Framework Model to the entire educational program. These have always been an integral part of home economics.
9. The inclusion of home economics (as a part of the Practical Arts strand) throughout the intermediate years.

Concepts in the Year 2000 Document THESA strongly opposes:

1. The name Practical Arts. It does not encompass the wide range of knowledge and skills that this group of subjects offers. We suggest a new name for this strand: *Practical Arts and Sciences* or *Applied Arts and Sciences*.
2. The inclusion of Learning for Living in the Humanities strand. We believe that it should be a part of the Practical Arts strand since home economics teachers have the university preparation in the subject matter and are comfortable teaching it.
3. Lack of prerequisites for any of the graduation programs. Not all students are naturally motivated to learn and work their way through the curricula. Many students will be satisfied to progress at a very

slow rate and will not be ready for the graduation program after seven years of school. In some courses, safety problems could be created by lack of prior training. The absence of prerequisites could cause senior level courses to be "watered down" to include the basics that some students have not received in previous years.

4. The mutual exclusiveness of the graduation programs. They close doors to students who may not be sure what they want.
5. The rigidity of time spent in the intermediate program. Slower students should be allowed the flexibility to take more than seven years to complete the program.
6. Compulsory Business Education 10. Why is it the only mandatory course in the Practical Arts strand? The course content appears to be inappropriate for students of that age group. If a business education course is compulsory, then a compulsory home economics course at the Intermediate Five year promoting healthy living should also be included.
7. The "and/or" in the following statement-"This will allow students to study home economics and/or technology education units..." (p. 32). The "or" should be eliminated to ensure gender equity and equal time allotment.

Concerns THESA has with the Year 2000 Document:

1. Teachers are not being consulted enough now as the initial plans are being made with this document (page 8 comments that teachers play a pivotal role in achieving a quality system and implementing change). Money, resources, and time need to be made available to support the teachers in this vital role.
2. The Common Curriculum is supposed to be offered during the entire 13 years of school; however, only the Humanities strand is actually offered for both Year One and Year Two of the Graduate Program. The other three strands are only expected to be taken for one year of the graduate program (thus the Common Curriculum actually is "common" only for 12 years rather than 13 years).
3. Implementation of individualized programs will be difficult in many subjects, especially if the present academic standards are to be maintained. Secondary teachers do not have time to individualize programs for 200(+) students.
4. The provincial curriculum will emphasize intended learning outcomes rather than learning activities. Teachers will need support in the form of resource material development.
5. Assessment and Evaluation. If student learning is supposed to be on a continuous basis and emphasizing what the student CAN do, then comparing individual students (p. 33) to all other students in the province is contradictory. How do teachers evaluate a student's social and career development (especially those teachers with 150-200 students whom they see only three hours per week)? Summative reporting as described in the document takes away from collecting marks throughout the term and places too much emphasis on a final exam. Marks earned throughout a period of time more accurately reflect the student's work.
6. Reporting Procedures. Will there be storage areas for portfolios? What is an "informal" report?

7. Curriculum . New curricula being developed for the "new school" - Will it emphasize process rather than content? If content is left up to individual teachers, there will be such a wide variety of content that students will lack common experiences. Common experiences are a key part of effective communication. A lack of consistency across the province will result if the guideline in paragraph 3 on page 33 is followed. Although it sounds fine in theory, scheduling would be an administrative nightmare.
8. Practical Arts at the early Intermediate years. How much time will be given to this strand as part of the Common Curriculum? This should be provincially mandated to ensure that all students get equal opportunity to study all four strands of the Common Curriculum. Support (funding, resources, training, etc.) must be available so that current elementary teachers are qualified to teach the Practical Arts. Itinerant teachers could be provided to teach the Practical Arts strand.
9. Work experience and learning sites away from the school. Will the student be SAFE? A worker may know his/her job, but will he/she be able to teach it to a student? Will students end up providing slave labour? Will the program put people out of work? Who will supervise the students? Is there valuable work for all areas of the curriculum? Many students already work and are gaining work experience without the mandate. Are enough positions/placements available?
10. The identification of significant signposts along the various learning dimensions. How are attitudes evaluated? How does a teacher keep track of the signposts of a large number of students? The system seems time-consuming and cumbersome. What degree of success indicates the attainment of a signpost? The mechanics of implementation seem improbable. Very small classes, lighter course loads, and training in the use of this system would be essential for its success.
11. Native Education. Increased support of Indian education (p. 8). Does this mean more emphasis in the curriculum, more money, or something else? Teachers need to be trained in teaching to the different learning styles of our native children. Money for this kind of in-service is vital. We feel that a native studies curriculum should be developed for the Intermediate Program as well as the Graduation Program.
12. Greater recognition of performance on scholarship exams (p. 8). What form will this recognition take?

Conditions required for successful implementation

1. A longer timeline. Teachers need more time for planning, in-service education, studying current research, investigating implications /ramifications, preparing new curricula, meeting with other teachers, etc.
2. Teachers need in-service training to learn how to teach multilevel classes.
3. Teachers need training in teaching to the variety of learning styles.
4. Teachers need classroom support (teaching assistants, class size limitations) and in-service training for the successful integration of special needs students.

5. Small classes, of 12 to 15 students, are realistic to implement the concepts outlined in the Year 2000 document.
6. Money, money, money.
7. Continuous consultation with teachers as the Year 2000 is being reworked and implemented.