

**To Linda Langdon, Louise Bailey, Linda Till, Nancy Rother**

**From David Clandfield, Policy Adviser, Office of the  
Minister of Education**

**June 5, 1992**

Sorry about the hurried look of this covering letter. I am trying to get this done quickly and out to you.

The meeting to discuss our hopes for future special education policy will be at

**7 King's College Circle  
Room 2000 (Second Floor)**

**Friday June 12, 1992  
11.30 a.m.**

**including lunch (my responsibility)**

King's College Circle is on the central St. George Campus of the University of Toronto, to the west of the Provincial Parliament Buildings and Queens Park.

TTC (recommended—parking is difficult or expensive): on the Spadina/University Avenue line, the best station is QUEENS PARK. Make for the NW exit and proceed to the north in the general direction the Provincial Parliament Buildings, keeping the roadway on your right. You will pass the Tanz Neuroscience (old with big sign) building on your left and then arrive at the Medical Sciences Building (big and new). You will see stone steps leading up to an entrance under a big overhang. Go up the steps but do not enter the building. Rather, go through a sort of open courtyard area that you cross diagonally in order to get to a big open grass area surrounded by university buildings. This is King's College Circle. Turn right on the circle (through the forest of bicycles) and you will find that the first old building on your right has a blue billboard announcing 7 Kings Colege Circle (Depts. of French and English). Room 2000 is at the top of the stairs.

Attached to these two sheets you will find a **Confidential** draft of a proposal for the Minister to consider that would act as a framework for direction to a writing team that are working on a Comprehensive Education Policy document about curriculum. There are some references to integrated special education. I should be glad if you could help me both strengthen them and make them more practical. He knows I am sharing it with you but I hope you will keep it confidential.

In this package, you will find **Confidential** internal discussion documents prepared by Ministry staff for the Learning Programs Advisory Committee. They are the latest stage in the development of four of the six Restructuring Initiatives that have been in the works for a long time now in the Ministry. ~~As you will see, they do not yet reflect the Minister's own policy preferences for an entrenched right to Integrated Special Education. This is because they drew only on the consultation document.~~ I provide them for you so that you can let me know how we could change things and, preferably, thread references to integration throughout the curriculum document when it finally emerges in the Fall.

A Policy/Program Memorandum is due to go out in the week of June 8. It will include reference to timelines for implementing integrated special education. I will try to have a copy of the official version of this when I meet you.

## THE CHALLENGE TO THE ONTARIO SCHOOL SYSTEM

The greatest challenge to public education systems today comes from the corporate agenda. This represents the aspirations of big business for a school system. Its aims are as follows:

- to equip students with the necessary skills to become members of the kind of workforce that private-sector employers want:
  - by emphasizing basic skills and good work habits (although, in the wake of new management practices and structures in industry and the office, there is some disagreement about how to define these skills and habits);
  - by demanding concentration on math, science and technology as the key to economic prosperity in a knowledge-based, high-tech economy (although there is scant evidence that the jobs are there to justify turning the whole school system over to this goal);
  - by a continuous regime of standardized testing (preparing people for a lifetime of constant on-the-job supervision, tracking and accountability by statistical process control and so on);
- to strengthen the ties between public education and private sector employers:
  - by reducing the professional role of teachers and increasing the participation of business executives and employers in the classroom and the running of schools;
  - by creating direct links between corporations and schools through such programs as "Adopt-A-School";
  - by developing and distributing curriculum materials designed to promote corporate perspectives on complex issues;
- to use the free enterprise competitive model as a way to improve education quality:
  - through direct or indirect funding support for private schools;
  - by reducing the professional role of teachers and increasing the participation of business
  - through school "choice" by means of voucher systems and regularly published school results on standardized tests and other indicators (rather like stock quotations) to inform consumers prior to choice.

The clearest expressions of the corporate agenda as public policy may be found in the following:

- in the UK, the Education Reform Act of 1988 and other reforms of the Thatcher government in the 1980's;
- in the US, the *America 2000* initiative launched by President George Bush in April 1991;
- in Canada, the Federal government's paper *Learning Well...Living Well*, launched in the fall of 1991 as part of the "Prosperity Initiative";
- in Canada, again, the Economic Council of Canada's report *A Lot to Learn*, published in the spring of 1992.

A Comprehensive Education Policy for Ontario must provide a clear alternative to this corporate agenda. It must be quite distinct from that agenda; it must be readily understood by the general public; it must respond to many of the public's legitimate concerns about our school system.

**PUBLIC EDUCATION IN ONTARIO**  
**EXCELLENCE, EQUITY, ACCOUNTABILITY, PARTNERSHIP**

**1. The Ontario Education System**

The Policy statement should open with a positive description of the Ontario education system.

This should include the following:

- a declaration of support for a publicly-funded, publicly-governed and publicly accountable education system with emphasis on a common purpose held in tension by societal demands for equity and diversity
- a balanced assessment of its performance that takes into account not only its achievements and its challenges, but which also identifies those areas where change is needed
- a description of the existing legislative/regulatory framework of curriculum policy-making with particular attention on the distribution of powers and responsibilities among Ministry, Boards and schools
- a description of the historic-constitutional context within which recognition is given to the rights of three distinct communities (Catholic, French-speaking and First Nations)
- a description of the place of private education in the Ontario education system and an explanation both for its existence and for its lack of public funding

## 2. Educational Principles

The comprehensive policy itself should begin with a clear, concise public statement reflects our principles in language that can help build strong consensual support. This language needs to be crafted carefully. For that reason, these principles are referred to here in point form.

- **Striving for Educational Equity and Excellence together which means**
  - raising expectations and standards of scholastic achievement equitably
  - improving access and opportunity at important entry-points (JK, secondary, post-secondary)
  - improving participation rates in meaningful education programs
  - making the curriculum inclusive, anti-racist and anti-sexist
  - seeking equity of outcome and continuous improvement
  
- **The Right to a COMMON Education that guarantees**
  - literacy and numeracy for all regardless of age
  - delay of selection (through streaming or other mechanisms) until school-leaving age
  - critical understanding of the modern world (social, political, technological, economic)
  
- **The Right to a BROAD Education Experience that includes**
  - the principles of general education rather than a narrow vocational emphasis
  - a comprehensive language policy (official/native/community/international languages)
  - the history and cultures of peoples from around the world
  
- **The Right to Know How We Are Doing by means of**
  - clear statements of anticipated outcomes (standards), illustrated by graphic examples
  - a wide range of holistic evaluation methods designed to enhance excellence and equity
  - improved reporting of students' achievement to students and parents/guardians
  - monitoring schemes that include indicators of *both* social equity *and* achievement
  
- **The Right to Preparation for Democratic Citizenship that includes**
  - giving people a part to play in decisions that affect their daily lives and their families
  - enhancing the cooperative spirit in schoolwork, evaluation, discipline and sports
  - including knowledge of rights, laws, and democratic institutions, and how to change them
  - working against prejudice, discrimination and violence in our daily lives
  
- **Preparing people for a Life of Learning that they will choose and own by**
  - ensuring that all school learning has meaning in the lives of the learners
  - ensuring that school-workplace programs are designed largely by educators and learners
  - maintaining a wide range of community-based adult programs
  - maintaining school board responsibility for continuing education
  
- **Finding a Community Role for the School in a changing society by**
  - defining the school as a hub for community services (daycare, recreation, health services)
  - defining the school as a community cultural centre (adult education, cultural events, etc.)
  
- **Creating and fostering Partnerships by**
  - redefining the curriculum roles of Ministry, Boards, teacher organizations and schools
  - providing a framework for democratic school-based decision-making
  - increasing the role of teachers in teacher training programs (pre-service, induction, in-service)

The document will then discuss curriculum and evaluation by areas of study, always keeping the four principles in mind. For the purposes of this statement, the focus will be on excellence and equity considered as parallel.

## EXCELLENCE

### *Language and Communication*

Our primary emphasis should be placed on language development, on full functional literacy as every Ontarian's right and a governmental commitment to support the attainment of this right by Ontarians of all ages.

Language and communication are central to the development of intellectual capacity, social integration, personal well-being, and the hopes for a better future. Within that understanding we need to develop an overall language policy, one that accommodates the striving for excellence across the range of languages in education:

- Official language=1st language (English/ français)
- Official language=2nd language (anglais/ESL/FSL)
- Native language as language of ancestral affiliation
- Community language/1st language (heritage language)
- International language-2nd language

This will form the basis of a truly **comprehensive language policy**. The educated citizen of Ontario will feel comfortable as a communicator in both official languages and will be able to read and write confidently, coherently, expressively, and analytically in at least one of them. Citizens whose ancestry includes only one or both official languages should have every opportunity to acquire functional fluency in at least one international language. The level of multilingualism in our emerging society will act as a potential indicator of intellectual development as well as a global perspective either in the pursuit of trading initiatives or international cooperation. The first steps towards this goal may be undertaken even in the Early Years, where ways should be found to incorporate the experience of various languages into the program without compromising dominant language development in both speech and writing.

Throughout the language curriculum, it is essential that the most progressive features of cognitive psychology inform the approaches to language development and language acquisition.

## EQUITY

### *Language and Communication*

Full functional literacy should be a **social right** as well as an individual right. Literacy statistics should include social indicators so that the relationship between school achievement and lines of social inequality become clear and appropriate changes can be undertaken in school programs.

Language learning, like all learning in a collective setting, is a social event as well as an individual one. Any effort to approach language development and language acquisition without careful reference to the community context and the broader societal context runs the risk of perpetuating patterns of school failure that form along lines of socio-economic, racial and ethnocultural difference in our society.

Within the ideal language curriculum, a place must be found for the understanding of how language functions, how languages relate to one another, and how language changes according to social context or through time. This should also include an understanding of power relations in language: notions of standard forms and dialects, language attitudes, language regulation and language variation. These can most profitably be introduced in the Transition Years, but a place should be found for them within the Specialization Years too.

An important feature of the **comprehensive language policy** will be its emphasis on social equity. Citizens whose ancestry includes another language should have the educational opportunity for it to flourish. A commitment to multilingualism does not seek justification only in terms of the cognitive advantage it confers upon the individual or for the international competitive advantage that it might bring to the economy. It is a constitutive feature of a society where intercultural understanding can flourish and a climate of equal partnership can prevail against the dominance of one linguistic, cultural or racial group over another.

## EXCELLENCE

### *Language and Communication*

**Learning Styles.** Naturally, since excellent achievement in ~~language~~ <sup>communication</sup> is the goal, we shall not insist on slavish adherence to any dogma in the selection of teaching methods or techniques. These must be tailored to the needs of individual learners. The most favourable ways to achieve effective learning may be understood as accommodating learning styles, as part of the effort to discover the student's best route to success.

Notions of literacy must also extend beyond spoken and oral language into other forms of communication, too. In other words, we should develop in learners a critical understanding of how the world is influenced by, say, the language of movement and images. Movement may be construed as everything from the understanding of different cultural systems of facial expression and gesture to the complex expressive forms of mime or dance and the use of American sign language. The language of images may extend from advertising or maps to the complex expressive forms of music videos or TV news coverage. Alongside this understanding should come a willingness and ability to gain control of this language, too, in conveying information by symbolic forms other than verbal language (signing <sup>communication</sup> with the deaf, making multi-media presentations to a class, producing maps or diagrams or videos).

### *Artistic Expression and Understanding*

Excellence in the sphere of art means both introducing students to the range of world art and encouraging areas of achievement in the students' own artistic expression. Once again, diversity must be the key to finding the area in which the individual student is most likely to excel. There must not be a slavish devotion to particular forms of artistic expression to the exclusion of others. Such a direction leads to the surrender of a potential for excellent achievement.

## EQUITY

### *Language and Communication*

**Learning Styles.** The accommodation of learning styles must, however, ~~should~~ not lead to stereotyping or a facile expectation that students from a particular background <sup>require</sup> specialized or separate treatment. Making an effort to accommodate the student will also mean reaching into the learner's own experiences, or finding activities that have a direct bearing on the learner's social context and aspirations. <sup>program adaptation for student's individual level</sup>

Extended notions of literacy should not use a critical approach to the language of images simply with a view to inoculating them against the consumption of popular culture (the "just say no to TV" approach). Learning how to "read" TV or advertising images means learning how to enter into an imaginary dialogue with those pictures so that their persuasive power does not pass unnoticed. This kind of critical understanding will be enhanced but not replaced by having students engage in their own forms of expression through these media.

Understanding gestural communication is another feature of intercultural understanding, both with people of other ethnocultural backgrounds and with the deaf community as it is increasingly integrated into mainstream society.

### *Artistic Expression and Understanding*

In the field of artistic expression and understanding, social equity demands that we expand the canon of what is studied both in cultural terms, to embrace the art of peoples and nations that we have traditionally ignored in the past. This applies to the literary canon every bit as much as to the canons of the visual arts, the plastic arts and the performing arts. The canon has to be made inclusive of a wider range, not simply tailored only to fit the cultural identity of any target population. An inclusive curriculum in artistic understanding will honour the cultures of those who follow it but will not ghettoize them within that culture.

## EXCELLENCE

### *Artistic Expression and Understanding*

The concern to encourage students' own artistic expression should not limit the opportunity for students to experience the range of artistic expression from other periods and other cultures, with a special place for Canada's own varied and lively traditions. The educated Ontario citizen is one who accords a valuable place to a broad range of artistic expression in our society, and who derives enjoyment from the experience of such works. Our schools must find ways of enhancing that enjoyment through the development of greater critical understanding rather than dulling it through the pedantic diffusion of factual information.

### *History and Cultural Identity*

The development of historical understanding should move from the immediate to the broadest level. The known history of the learner's family or community can be led into the sense of a historical context in an ever-expanding sense of place (locality-region-province-nation-continent-world). The educated Ontario citizen will be one who understands:

- the historical origins and development of human settlement and of nation-building in Canada;
- the evolution of Canada's society, culture and economy: locally, regionally, nationally;
- the evolution of Canada's relationships with other nations, powers and world regions;
- the sense of patterns in human development through time: locally, nationally, globally;
- the notion of historical perspective and different approaches to history.

### *Human Rights and Social Values*

**Civic Understanding.** Our school system is embedded within a federal democracy. All Ontario citizens should understand the nature of that federal democracy: the institutions, processes, laws, rights and freedoms that we hold in common and that are enshrined within our Constitution. Among other things, this means understanding the distribution of jurisdictional powers: federal, provincial, local.

## EQUITY

### *Artistic Expression and Understanding*

Similarly, social equity demands that the curriculum expand the range of artistic forms worthy of attention and practice. Learners should not be encouraged to devalue the forms of popular culture, or to feel that popular culture does not offer appropriate vehicles for self-expression. The forms of both so-called high art and popular art should find a place within the learner's experience, both as objects of reflection and enjoyment as well as vehicles for their own expression.

### *History and Cultural Identity*

It is not enough to stimulate learners' curiosity about the past in order to inculcate love and respect for things historical. A passion for learning is important, but self-contained historical learning leads to antiquarianism. The study of history must be intimately tied to a sense of who we are, how we got here, and how things change. In other words, we must relate historical understanding to the formation of national and cultural identities, social interaction and social change.

A curriculum that wants to prepare students to build a better society should help them understand the lessons of the past. When health, wealth, knowledge and power are not shared evenly throughout a society, inequalities and injustices arise that create a demand for social change. Examples of successful efforts to improve society in the past can serve as models of hope and instruction for the future.

### *Human Rights and Social Values*

**Civic Understanding.** Understanding our federal democracy also means knowing the limits that are placed on individuals and the freedoms individuals enjoy. It means knowing the limits that are placed on institutional authorities and the powers that are vested in them. It means understanding the rights accorded to minorities within a framework of electoral democracy.



## EXCELLENCE

### *Human Rights and Social Values*

**Sociological Understanding.** Alongside this civic understanding must come clear awareness of other institutions that serve to shape our social experience and help form our loyalties and values: family, community, school, the justice system, religious institutions, workplace, and so on.

A solid understanding of the nature of violence, crime, and the various forms of social pathology that students are exposed to, both in their daily lives and in sensational accounts in the media is essential.

**Philosophy and Religion.** This process of sociological understanding leads naturally to a greater degree of reflection about the deeper questions of existence, through an understanding of philosophy and religion. This too should be accorded a place within the curriculum.

### *Global-Environmental Understanding*

A distinction has to be made between an understanding of the patterns of world history and geopolitical understanding. An educated Ontario citizen must be able to make sense of and evaluate the reporting of world events in the here and now. This entails an understanding of such geopolitical realities as the New World Order, the role of the United Nations, the North-South debate and the rise of Islam.

Global understanding must encompass environmental understanding: climates, ecosystems, sustainability, and the relationship between human aspirations and planetary limitations.

Global understanding must encompass economic understanding, too: economic sectors and their transformation, exchange and the growth of large trading blocks, the relationship between wealth creation and wealth distribution.

## EQUITY

### *Human Rights and Social Values*

**Sociological Understanding.** It will be important to ensure that the hidden curriculum (of school organization, teacher-student relationships, and so on) also reflect this commitment to and understanding of human rights.

Schools should be mandated to develop and implement cooperative forms of conflict-resolution and regulation of in-school conduct.

**Philosophy and Religion.** It is recognized that many learners will want to preserve their commitment to one set of religious practices and beliefs over all others, and to the extent that this does not limit the liberties of others, schools should not interfere with that commitment. This too should be accorded a place within the curriculum.

### *Global-Environmental Understanding*

School systems should not shy away from international controversy. It is important that the discussion of such issues be conducted with sensitivity and an awareness that there may be strongly-held opposing views represented in the same classroom.

## EXCELLENCE

### *Physical Health, Personal Well-Being*

Excellence is not limited to prowess. The idealization of physical achievement or appearance leads all too easily to the lionization of the already powerful and dominant. This is not the road to genuine excellence for our society as a whole.

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Promotion, closely linked with prevention, must begin with understanding. All educated Ontario citizens must understand their own bodies (and this includes sexuality; it also includes activities of the brain and central nervous system) and see this understanding in relationship to differences in others. From that understanding must come the avoidance of voluntary risks to good health and personal well-being and the active engagement in activities that will promote good health and personal well-being. Alongside the personal dimension there must be an understanding of environmental risk (both biological and social).

### *Technological Understanding in a Changing Environment*

Technology, the processes by which we control and direct our environment, needs to be accorded emphasis throughout our educational system. The program must avoid becoming one-dimensional, leading to technomania through an excess of positive reinforcement or to technophobia through an excess of critical zeal. The danger of an uncritically positive bias in technological studies strand in the curriculum is that it may simply serve to prepare uncritical generations of machine-ready (or computer-ready) workers and consumers or lure large numbers into thinking that technological specialization is the key to personal prosperity when the jobs are not there to sustain the myth. The danger of a negative bias in technological studies is that it can alienate understanding, consigning this knowledge and the skills that may go with it to a knowledgeable and privileged minority, while the majority remain mystified. Control goes to the few, while dependency is the lot of the many.

## EQUITY

### *Physical Health, Personal Well-Being*

The goals of a physical and health education program will be to promote personal health and well-being of individuals in the interests of the whole society. The link between the two must be clear. The individual interest and the collective interest coincide here.

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Understanding and engaging in sports and athletics is an important part of such a program. The notion of competition is not to be discarded simply because it appears to collide with the worthy goal of cooperation. Rather the two should be held in tension so that one does not crowd out the other. The way to prevent elitism within sports programs is to ensure that they are as broadly-based as possible, and that excellence be defined in ways that honour or empower diversity (whether of age, or gender, or physical condition).

### *Technological Understanding in a Changing Environment*

The most optimistic version of a technological studies program throughout the curriculum is one that sees in it a harnessing of intellectual and manual skills within activities that are rewarding for the individual and valuable in a variety of ways to the collectivity. It provides then the dream of a collapse of the industrial era's separation of these kinds of activity into domains that have ultimately structured contemporary forms of social inequality.

## EXCELLENCE

### *Scientific Method and Progress*

Scientific knowledge is important for every educated Ontario citizen. Equally important, however, is scientific understanding and scientific method. We all need to know not only what it is that scientists know and tell us, but how they find out and how they go about proving it. Without an understanding of scientific principles and processes, the educated Ontario citizen has little chance of evaluating information received. There should be something of the scientist in all of us. A science curriculum is not designed only to help us locate and train the few who will actually make a career in this field. Scientific understanding is an essential feature of the critical mind in the modern era.

### *Mathematical Facility and Vision*

The mathematics program must lead from the acquisition of computational facility to mathematical understanding. Once again, every effort must be made to ensure that it not trade only in logical certainties and automated behaviours, as important as these are. The aspiration to excellence requires that imprecise techniques such as estimation and approximation or more complex techniques such as logical reasoning and problem-solving for the real world be understood, practised and valued alongside traditional notions of precise calculation.

## EQUITY

### *Scientific Method and Progress*

Equally important in scientific understanding is its ethical dimension. Ethical conduct in scientific experimentation and application, whether with human subjects, other living creatures or the natural environment as a whole, must be an intrinsic part of any science program.

Another feature of the program must be something that draws into scientific understanding principles of uncertainty and humility. The search and accounting for immutable laws in the physical world must not lure us into simple certainties. Discovery, the production of new knowledge proceeds from a discovery that an old certainty was unfounded. Science must be understood as a process of challenge and change. Learners must be given opportunities and encouragement to make discoveries. The process of realizing that surfaces hide different, even unexpected, realities is a profoundly healthy one for individual growth as well as social responsibility. At the same time, it is important that scientific processes not be limited to serendipity but be understood as part of a chain of analysis, verification and re-interpretation that leads ultimately to public communication and social benefit.

### *Mathematical Facility and Vision*

The equity dimension in mathematics and science that has drawn most attention in recent years is the poorer average performance of female students above the age of puberty. The policy document must indicate program options to help correct this imbalance.

**Evaluation and Assessment**

An Ontario evaluation and assessment policy will be closely linked with the objectives and expected outcomes of the Comprehensive Education Policy. It will contain statements on the following:

- a benchmarks program that will provide clear descriptions of standards and anticipated levels of attainment at strategic points throughout the school system, illustrated by graphic exemplars
- the extent and conditions of and the rationale for Ontario's participation in large-scale system monitoring through such programs as the School Achievement Indicators program (nationally) and the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (internationally)
- a comprehensive student profiling system that would provide more detailed information about the student it accompanied than the current OSR and that would be regularly shared with student and parents/guardians
- an annual system report card detailing results of provincial reviews, other statistical information including equity indicators comparable to the Every Student Survey, a summary of new policy directions and policy reviews, etc.

**Cross-curricular Approaches to Education**

The basic skills of language and mathematics should not be imprisoned by subject boundaries. The Ministry should encourage schools to develop language policies and mathematics policies that include both subject-specific and cross-curricular components. Successful examples of cross-curricular language policy and math policy in action should be assembled and made available to boards and schools across the province

**Community-Based Career Education**

Career education should not be limited to vocational guidance but be viewed as learning about the real world. It should be community-based and enquiry-based

**Cooperative Education and School-Workplace Initiatives**

There must be a thorough overhaul of such programs. They should be seen as opportunities to augment the academic components of a good general education, and not replace them. There must be integration of the activities conducted in the workplace and the school-based components of the student's program

**Integrated Special Education**

*the why is the article back page*

This policy must be expressed in terms of human rights. It must be clear and it must recognize the role of parents and guardians, too, in the exercise of that right. It should not be consigned to the back pages of the document but be threaded throughout at appropriate points, so that in all areas of the curriculum attention can be focused on finding ways to implement it effectively

The rights in question are as follows:-

- to attend any school that one would have the right to attend except for one's exceptionality
- to be placed in a classroom setting appropriate to the student's age with appropriate programs and services *+ supports*
- *guarantee of access*