Curriculum Standards and Process Redesign (CSPR) Project

Action on Curriculum: Research Roundtable 3 – Event Overview
(May 30–31, 2011, Edmonton, Alberta)

I. Purpose of this document
This document provides an overview of common themes related to understandings of Flexible Timing and Pacing in a Variety of Learning Environments, Responsive Curriculum, Assessment of Competencies, and Assessment that emerged from Roundtable 3.

II. Goals for Research Roundtable 3
- To move toward a common Alberta understanding of Flexible Timing and Pacing in a Variety of Learning Environments, Responsive Curriculum, Assessment of Competencies, and Assessment, which are foundational to the redesign of standards and guidelines for the development of provincial curriculum.
- To add to the pool of research available to inform *Action on Curriculum* and to further ensure that curriculum redesign approaches are research-based.

III. Participants
There were 201 delegates representing public, private and charter schools, post-secondary institutions, government, business and industry, non-government agencies, students, parent and teacher organizations, and other stakeholders.

IV. Key concepts discussed at the roundtable
- Flexible Timing and Pacing in a Variety of Learning Environments
- Curriculum Responsive to the Student, the Students' Learning Environment and Evolving Societal Needs (Responsive Curriculum)
- Assessment of Competencies
- Assessment

V. Process
Topics were explored through a dialogic approach using *Appreciative Inquiry* involving the phases of Discover, Dream and Design. Common themes/understandings from table discussions were compiled by table recorders. Common themes and understandings from these discussions are listed under each of the key concepts below.

VI. Common themes/Understandings
Flexible Timing and Pacing in a Variety of Learning Environments
Delegates described their understandings of Flexible Timing and Pacing in a Variety of Learning Environments as:
- student learning experiences which can occur within and beyond the traditional school (any place) and inside or outside the traditional school day or year (anytime) through face-to-face or online learning (synchronous and asynchronous), or as a blended experience enabling the co-creation of knowledge using current and emerging technologies as tools

- students taking greater ownership (choice and readiness to learn) for their own learning
- teachers becoming facilitators, mentors, coaches and guides
- problem- or project-based learning, which is enabled by rich information and communications technology environments with flexible assessments, and learning and teaching resources
- enhanced relationships among students, teachers and the community
- facilitation of student progression at a level suitable to their learning needs, capabilities, interests and passions
- aggregation and disaggregation of learning outcomes, assessments, and learning and teaching resources to permit scaffolding at a time, a pace and in a setting that optimizes student potential and engagement to meet their needs.

Responsive Curriculum
Delegates described their understandings of Responsive Curriculum as:
- flexible, allowing students to bring their ways of knowing and ways of learning to explore broadly and gain deeper understandings of bodies of knowledge, applying these understandings within local and global contexts. Curriculum includes three components:
  1. Programs of study that enable student-centred/personalized learning and identify enduring understandings and developmental learning outcomes that encompass competencies to meet the learning needs of all students, and
     - provide opportunities for interdisciplinary learning and inquiry
     - are relevant and responsive learner outcomes reflecting emerging events, technologies, community and societal needs
     - are flexible to enable broad exploration and deep understanding of concepts
     - support a collaborative approach among teachers, students, parents/caregivers and the community to develop learning experiences for meeting local needs.
  2. Assessments that measure the levels of a student's success, as aligned with learning outcomes, are meaningful, clear, dynamic, timely, ongoing, and embedded in real-world contexts, and
     - supportive of all learning styles
     - accessible for all students
     - provide evidence of student learning supported in a variety of ways, including self, peer and teacher assessments; rubrics; tests (print and online); performance assessments; and teacher-recorded observation
     - available in print or digital formats
     - formative assessments, collected over a period of time, promoting dialogue between the student and the teacher and among peers in facilitating mastery of learning outcomes

- summative assessments, collected at a single point in time, providing evidence of cumulative learning of broad exploration of bodies of knowledge and deep understanding of concepts
- students demonstrating contextual learning; accessing and analyzing information to represent what they know.
3. Learning and teaching resources that provide students with equitable opportunities to engage in broad exploration of bodies of knowledge and deep understanding of concepts. These learning and teaching resources provide a range of authentic and relevant experiences that can be holistic, experiential, interactive and hands-on, and
  - facilitate the development of individual learning paths that are student-centred and personalized, recognizing student interests, passions and capabilities
  - enable student-student/teacher collaboration
  - adaptable and accessible in traditional and non-traditional learning environments to all learners in a variety of formats
  - available in print and digital formats, including interactive digital objects and audio, and accessed on an ongoing basis
  - open and multiple modes of access and delivery
  - current, relevant and accessible to enable a new level of responsiveness to the world in which students live.

Assessment of Competencies

Delegates described their understandings of Assessment of Competencies as:

- evidence of a student's ability to apply attitudes, skills and knowledge in relevant contexts
- ongoing as the learner moves through a developmental progression of cognitive, affective and psychomotor development
- students' learning assessed through demonstration of the degree to which a competency is developed, using a continuum to identify and describe the progression of levels of competence within a competency
- having a range of categories and levels
- including clear assessable targets for learning
- considering the developmental characteristics of learners.

Assessment

Delegates described their understandings of Assessment as:

- flexible and multifaceted, and supporting student-centred learning and ensuring that learning is progressing based upon reliable, valid data
- both formative and summative assessments (for, of, as), embedded within learning, for meeting students' needs and abilities, and in establishing what students know, are able to do, and can reflect on as they learn
- including provincial assessments for determining whether students are learning what they are expected to learn and whether or not they have achieved provincial standards

- being adaptable and responsive to current and developing research theory and practice
- developed to demonstrate the acquisition of competencies and subject discipline content that:
  - is personalized and authentic engagement
  - reflects the needs of the learner
  - makes available a variety of assessment types; e.g., performance assessment, self-assessment, tests
  - informs learners where they are and the next steps in their learning process
- outlining clearly articulated criteria that:
  - define the purpose for assessing
  - are fair, technically sound and valid
  - ensure high quality evidence of learning
  - provide exemplars of student work
  - provide relevant and meaningful feedback
  - provide clear, timely reporting that adds value for learning and teaching
  - consider the balance and integration between learning and assessment
- creating a dialogue among learners, teachers, parents, administrators and other stakeholders.

VII. Next Steps
- *Summary of Findings: Research Roundtables 1, 2 and 3* report to be released during the third week of September 2011.
- The common understandings for each of the key concepts, captured and collated at the roundtables, will help inform the drafting of descriptors for the guiding principles for future curriculum design. These principles will contribute to the shaping of draft standards, guidelines and associated processes for the development of future provincial curriculum.