



## The Next Generation of Teachers



*How are B.C.'s teacher education programs changing to support teacher candidates in bringing BC's new curriculum to life in engaging and inspiring ways?*

BC's teacher education programs are shifting their program structures and practices to ensure that teacher candidates have the competencies and skills to successfully engage their future students in the redesigned K-12 curriculum. Programs have moved away from the knowledge-based frameworks of the past in favour of competency-based and inquiry-driven approaches for educating teacher candidates.

The University of Victoria is one of several post-secondary institutions spearheading this change. "Our students have come out of traditional learning environments and we are now asking them to think very differently about what education is," says Kathy Sanford, a professor in the faculty of education at UVic. "Our teacher education classes model the use of competencies and an inquiry approach. And we teach in ways that are relational, emphasizing the need for integrated and interdisciplinary practice."



Partnerships with schools are crucial for this work, and teacher candidates often spend time in schools and classroom, prior to their formal practicum field experiences. Moving the site of learning from the university campus to a local school enables teacher candidates to appreciate the complexity of their work as teachers.

“When they go into those classrooms early on, the issues and strategies we are talking about in our university classes become much more real,” says Sanford. “Our pre-service teachers are able to reflect on what they have learned and understand the need for transformative approaches to education that are different than what they experienced as K-12 students.”

Joe Tong has been seconded to the University of British Columbia as a faculty advisor to teacher candidates doing their practicums in the Lower Mainland. Like Sanford, Tong wants his students to learn within a setting that mirrors the environments they will be creating for their own students.

*“We support our teacher candidates to look at the material through the lens of their own competencies and skills,” Tong says. “We don’t want them to take things at face value. We want them to make critical and informed decisions and to design teaching strategies based on their specific environment – where they are teaching, the students they have in their class and their own personal competencies that they bring to their work.”*

Teal Imbeau is one of Tong’s students at UBC and is currently working through a 10-week practicum at Howe Sound Secondary School in Squamish. “When I started my teacher education training in September, the concept of grounding my teaching in core competencies and curricular competencies was new to me,” she says. “Now that I’m familiar with these ideas, I see how valuable they are. I plan my lessons through the lens of design thinking, and I’ve seen how this gives my students an opportunity to go deeper into the material and understand how the processes involved are transferrable to other situations.”

Imbeau’s experience has been very positive. “I’m able to try things and take risks in a supported environment where I know my advisors are rooting for me,” she says. That freedom to define an approach, test it out, reflect on what worked and modify as needed is what she hopes to create for her own students.



Samantha Gilbert, another teacher candidate at UBC, also says that the way she is being taught in her teacher education program is very different from the heavy focus on content that defined her own K-12 education. She points to three key differences in both how she is being trained as a teacher candidate and in the expectations for how she will teach students in the future.

The first is the focus on student inquiry and empowering learners to be inquisitive, actively engaged and asking critical questions about their world. The second is the inclusion of both Indigenous content and perspectives across the entire curriculum and for all grade levels. “This isn’t something that is tacked on to a unit in one course,” she says. “The First Peoples Principles of Learning are woven throughout the curriculum as we do work to indigenize our classrooms and our approaches to education.”

Finally, she notes that the core competencies and their emphasis on social and emotional proficiencies represent a significant shift from past practices. “These are so important not just for academic success, but for life-long learning and well-being,” she says.

Both Tong and Sanford are excited by the opportunities to model new approaches to learning and teaching – providing space for intentional conversations with teacher candidates about how they will develop their competencies and bring a spirit of inquiry and collaboration to their work.

“We’re asking new teachers to trust us as they shift their thinking and expectations of what it means to be a teacher,” says Sanford. “This work is so worthwhile, and these new teachers are helping change the face of education in B.C.”

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## Learn More

- › **First People’s Principles of Learning** are deeply embedded in all aspects of the new BC K-12 curriculum.
- › **BC’s New Curriculum** provides detailed information on the redesigned K-12 curriculum, including the core competencies, curriculum by grade and subject area, instructional samples, and assessment materials.



- > **A Framework for Classroom Assessment** presents a conceptual framework for designing classroom assessments focused on the curricular competencies. It describes how teacher teams collaborated to develop observable criteria for Science, English Language Arts, Social Studies, and Mathematics to support classroom assessment activities.
- > **Assessment Webinars**, featuring Tom Schimmer, a B.C.-based assessment author and former B.C. teacher and administrator, provide a detailed explanation of B.C.'s redesigned curriculum and the changing nature of assessment.