



January 29, 2015

Ms. Evelyn Novak
Board of Education - School District #33
8430 Cessna Drive
Chilliwack, British B.C. V2P 7K4

Dear Ms. Novak,

Thank you for your letter dated January 7th, 2015 in response to our offer to partner with the Chilliwack School District #33.

I wish to seek clarification regarding statements in your letter and also provide our perspective regarding the book we have proposed.

In your letter, you have indicated that the resource, *The Magic of Reality* by Richard Dawkins, is not approved by the Ministry of Education. Does the BC Ministry of Education have an approval process for distributing resources? Are you able to share a copy of the approval process, criteria or other supporting documentation so we may investigate this?

You have also indicated that, in your opinion, the book does not support the Prescribed Learning Outcomes and the intentions of the curriculum. This troubled me greatly, so I looked at this information on the BC government website at this location: <https://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/plo.php>

The prescribed learning outcomes set the learning standards for the provincial K to 12 education system and form the prescribed curriculum for British Columbia. They are statements of what students are expected to know and do at the end of an indicated grade or course.

Schools have the responsibility to ensure that all prescribed learning outcomes in each IRP are met; however, schools have flexibility in determining how delivery of the prescribed learning outcomes can best take place. It is expected that student achievement will vary in relation to the prescribed learning outcomes. Evaluation, reporting, and student placement with respect to these outcomes are dependent on the professional judgment and experience of teachers, guided by provincial policy.

Ms. Novak, as I am certain you are aware, the Grade 5 Curriculum has a science section which includes science process (experiments), life science (human body), physics (movement of objects, etc), earth and space which is described as renewable and non-renewable resources. I feel very confident in asserting that *The Magic of Reality* by Richard Dawkins, as a science text, does an excellent job of supporting these learning outcomes.

Specifically, *The Magic of Reality* explains a stunningly wide range of natural phenomena. What is stuff

made of? How old is the universe? Why do the continents look like disconnected pieces of a puzzle? What causes tsunamis? Why are there so many kinds of plants and animals? Who was the first man, or woman? What is the sun? What is a rainbow? When and how did everything begin? Are we alone?

I also noted, Ms. Novak that the Social Studies curriculum for Grade 5 students specifies:

identify alternative interpretations and viewpoints on a selected topic (e.g., immigration, resource use)
demonstrate an awareness of reasons why people have differing views
research information to define and defend a position on a selected topic

I feel confident, Ms. Novak that *The Magic of Reality* readily applies to “identifying alternative interpretations and viewpoints on a selected topic”, “why people have differing views” and “researching information to defend a position”. Indeed, I can scarcely think of a better book to assist students to identify critical thinking and alternative viewpoints as suggested by this curriculum objective!

CFI Canada understands that decisions in this regard are within your purview. We have here submitted comments that indicate our criteria for suggesting that this book does meet the learning objectives and further requested clarification of a government approval process which you have referenced.

Given that you have stated that it is your decision that: “Therefore, it is not be approved for distribution.” (sic), we request the criteria which you have used or considered to render this opinion. Is there a written policy or guideline which you have used in your decision that we may review? Have you read the book to understand the contents and how they relate to the curriculum?

As previously indicated, Centre For Inquiry Canada is a registered Canadian charity with the mission to *provide education and training to the public in the application of skeptical, secular, rational and humanistic inquiry through conferences, symposia, lectures, published works and the maintenance of a library*. In pursuit of our mission, we wish to provide *The Magic of Reality* by Richard Dawkins to promote science education and critical thinking to school children in your district.

Our board, members and supporters will wish to understand your decision on this question given that their charitable purpose of providing science and critical thinking education materials and tools is being declined by an educational authority.

Should you require additional information regarding this initiative or other matters relating to CFI Canada, please feel free to contact me at ksmith@cficanada.ca or at our office, 416-971-5676.

Sincerely,



Kevin Smith

Chair, CFI Canada Board of Directors

Cc Ms. Joanne Britton

Mr. Richard Dawkins