

# Supporting Student Success



Working Together in  
BC Public Schools



BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils



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This handbook would not be possible without information and support from the following organizations:

- BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC)
- British Columbia Ministry of Education (MoE)
- British Columbia Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association (BCPVPA)
- British Columbia School Superintendents Association (BCSSA)
- British Columbia School Trustees Association (BCSTA)
- British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF)

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**BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils**

## Supporting Student Success: Working Together in BC Public Schools

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# about this handbook

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*“The purpose of the British Columbia school system is to enable learners to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy society and a prosperous and sustainable economy.”*

BC Ministry of Education, Statement of Education Policy Order 1989

BC public schools and school districts are “learning communities.” They are places where students, parents, educators, support staff and community members – respecting and supporting each other’s roles – share responsibility for student learning.

Students’ success in BC’s public schools depends a great deal on the relationships among all the education partners in schools and districts. Parents play an important role in these relationships. They have insight, enthusiasm and skills as well as a commitment to their children and public schools that is crucial to the success of all students. Parents have the right and the responsibility to be involved in their children’s education. These rights co-exist with the rights and responsibilities of the people who work in schools and districts.

In 1996, the handbook *Building Partnerships in Schools* helped parents with their first formal advisory role in their schools. It provided parents with information about the legislation, policy and practice that helped them in their interactions with others in the system. It gave educators and parents a starting point to work together to improve parents’ access to the system.

*Supporting Student Success: Working Together in BC Public Schools* uses and expands on information from the first handbook. It is not meant to create new policy, suggest how parent involvement should happen or replace the roles of the legislature, minister or school boards.

## A guide to the symbols used in this booklet

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Something to think about.



Where parents can go for more information.

This handbook intends to help parents and parent leaders understand the roles and responsibilities in the public education system and the different ways parents can be involved in their children’s learning. It includes information about:

- parent involvement in BC
- the roles and responsibilities of the partners involved in public education
- coming together in the best interests of students
- parent and community partnerships in BC’s schools and districts
- governance and legislation.

It will also be useful to other education partners as they continue their collaboration with parents to create positive learning communities where parents are actively and effectively involved at all levels to support students’ learning.

A parent is defined in the *School Act* as:

- the guardian of the person of the student or child
- the person legally entitled to custody of the student or child, or
- the person who usually has the care and control of the student or child.



# 1 parent involvement

*“Parents generally believe – a belief to which this Commission subscribes – that parent-teacher cooperation and mutual understanding between a child’s home and school, will result in a superior learning environment for that child. Moreover, parents rightfully feel they are entitled to full and accurate information about not only their own child’s progress, but also about the goals and policies of their school and school district – as well as to an advocacy role or voice when they so desire. There is a natural interest and a natural wish to be involved, not necessarily in active governance positions, but in advisory capacities to school authorities and school districts.”*

Barry Sullivan  
Royal Commission on Education  
*A Legacy for Learners: Summary of Findings, 1988*



Where the term “parent” is used, “family” can also be used, because many children are raised not just by a parent or parents, but also by aunts and uncles, grandparents, guardians and siblings.

Parents are their children’s first teachers and have the primary responsibility for their care and well-being.

They love their children and want to do what is best for them. Educators share parents’ desire to support students in their learning and help them succeed.

Parents and educators in BC are working together to support children’s learning in a variety of ways. They have experienced what more than 30 years<sup>1</sup> of research has shown—that when parents are involved in their children’s learning, their children are more likely to:

- perform better academically at school
- attend school regularly
- show improved behaviour and have better social skills
- adapt well to school
- graduate and go on to post-secondary education.

## What is Parent Involvement?

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Researcher Joyce Epstein, Director of the Center on School, Family and Community Partnerships, Johns Hopkins University, has identified six areas<sup>2</sup> of parent involvement in education:

**Parenting:** Helping families gain parenting skills and an understanding of their children’s development; helping families create home settings that support learning; helping schools understand families

**Communicating:** Providing families with information about school programs and student progress through effective school-to-home and home-to-school communications, (this includes newsletters, report cards, phone calls, conferences, emails, websites, etc.)

**Volunteering:** Involving families in school-based activities such as attending and helping at school events or helping in school and classroom activities

**Learning at home:** Involving families in learning activities with their children at home, including supervising and helping with homework

**Decision-making:** Involving families in school decision-making and governance, including school committees; helping individual parents advocate for their children

**Collaborating with the community:** Coordinating with other community agencies to support families, connecting families with support services outside the school.

## What is Meaningful Parent Involvement?

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Renihan and Renihan (1994)<sup>3</sup> say that meaningful parent involvement:

- is driven by educational motives and directed at the needs of the child
- assumes that home and school are interdependent
- assumes that parents need to be educated about the school and that teachers need to be educated about the home
- is viewed as an important vehicle for school improvement
- is based on sustained and free communication between school and home.



**The public school system has a “language” that is often confusing to parents. Educators and parent leaders can make the language more user-friendly and encourage parents to ask about things they don’t understand.**



### **Parent Involvement Strategies**

The William Cook Elementary School staff (SD 38 Richmond) developed a DVD to help parents provide a rich reading environment at home.

*Helping Your Child to Read* also includes translations in Cantonese, Mandarin and Tagalog.

With the input of an all-partner committee, Langley School District (SD 35) has developed a handbook to help parents, teachers, principals, support staff and others encourage parent involvement at all levels in the district. The 77-page handbook also includes a section on practices that teachers are using in their classrooms to include parents in supporting their children’s learning in literacy, numeracy and critical thinking.

[www.sd35.bc.ca/parents/parent\\_handbook.pdf](http://www.sd35.bc.ca/parents/parent_handbook.pdf)

## Challenges to Parent Involvement

In many schools, parents face challenges to supporting their children’s learning. In some schools, their challenges may not be obvious to others. Schools can find respectful ways to explore and respond to the needs of their parent community.

Parents may:

- be unaware of their right and responsibility to be involved
- not be getting the information they need to participate
- have problems finding child care or transportation
- have work schedules that conflict with school schedules
- not understand the roles of school staff and families
- feel unwelcome or intimidated at the school
- have had their own poor experiences with school
- be unable to help with their children’s learning at home
- have cultural differences
- not speak English
- live in poverty
- live in isolation
- be experiencing family breakdown.

Educators may:

- not be organized to meet parents’ abilities and availability
- lack training or experience in working with parents
- believe that parent involvement challenges professional autonomy
- believe that parents are unwilling or unable to help.

## Cultural Respect Team

At Bayside Middle School (SD 63 Saanich), the Cultural Respect Team is working on specific strategies to involve Aboriginal families in the school and improve success for Aboriginal students.

The team began in 2002 when former principal Marlene Dergousoff pulled together a small group of people to talk about how they could work together to address issues and provide support for First Nations children attending Bayside. They met regularly to discuss what was working, what wasn't working and what was needed. The answers determined that a bigger group was needed to share information, pool resources and expertise, and the Cultural Respect Team formed.

The team now includes representatives of all the district schools with First Nations students, Elders, members of the First Nations communities, the NIT'TUO First Nations Social Services Program, local community agencies, police and others. Meetings have included "showcases" by First Nations and non-First Nations students on the projects they were working on together.

Relationships developed as the team respectfully discussed issues related to the school, some of which also had an impact in the community. The broad representation on the team allowed for networks to build as the team moved into specific ideas on how they could work together to support student attendance, communication with parents and parent involvement, said principal Ray Rogers.

The team has acted on a number of strategies to support about 75 First Nations students. This year the bands' newsletters, delivered directly to homes, will include articles from the school. An orientation meeting with all Grade 6 teachers, counsellors and support workers is held at the cultural centre on Tsartlip Reserve. The meeting helps parents of children in Grade 5 support their children in the transition to middle school. A weekly homework club at Bayside uses First Nations students from Stelly's high school to help the younger children with their homework. When transportation was a problem, the local police offered the use of a van.

Bayside, enrolling 750 students, also welcomes the local First Nations culture into the school to benefit all students. The school celebrates Aboriginal Day in June. During school breaks, Elders share activities, such as knitting, reading with students and talking about the cultural aspects of their lives. They also provide support for the language of the Saanich people, Sencoten, a course taught at the school.



## Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements

School districts and Aboriginal communities are coming together to improve success for Aboriginal students in BC schools by developing Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements (EA). The EA is a working agreement between a school district, all local Aboriginal communities and the Ministry of Education.

These agreements include goals and strategies for increasing the academic achievement of Aboriginal students and stress the importance that traditional culture and language has in their development and success. School districts are also required to provide strong programs on the culture of local Aboriginal peoples.

## Encouraging Parent Involvement

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Schools are trying different ways to encourage parent involvement. Each school community is different, so what works in one school may not work in another. When schools talk to parents about what families need to support their children's learning, they can identify and consider ways to help parents with their involvement.

Some of the ways schools are encouraging parent involvement include:

- making sure the first contact with parents is positive
- using different ways to provide parents with information about their children's progress, school and classroom
- accommodating parents' work schedules
- providing transportation
- accommodating language and cultural differences
- designing ways to involve parents in their children's learning
- designing an organizational structure for parent involvement
- providing training to parents to help them get involved in different ways
- identifying and supporting learning environments beyond the schools
- connecting with community organizations
- connecting parents with schools before children reach school age.

Epstein's research has found that when schools reach out to families in many different ways, they are more likely to:

- involve more families, especially families of diverse backgrounds
- improve the academic achievement and behaviour of more students
- enjoy greater support from parents, staff members and the community.

## Diversity

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Students from many different backgrounds, with many different needs, attend public schools. All schools have the responsibility to teach and model understanding and respect for all persons.

Promoting a school culture that values diversity and responds to the needs of the school community is an evolving process. At times, people find it difficult to talk about issues of diversity. Creating a respectful environment



Surrey School District (SD 36) enrolls approximately 64,000 students. Approximately one in four students is from a household in which English is not the first language. More than 13,000 students, representing more than 92 different languages, received instruction in English as a Second Language in the 2005/2006 school year. As of September 30, 2005, there were 2,600 Aboriginal students. Over 5,000 students (8%) come from families on income assistance—this ranges from 0% to 54% at the school level. As of September 30, 2005, there were more than 2,200 funded and 4,200 unfunded special needs students in the district.

Source: Surrey School District  
2005-2006 Accountability Contract

that is sensitive to the practices and beliefs of others and where people can feel safe to talk about differences is part of the process.

The Anti-Racism Toolkit published by the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) states that educators have responsibility as teachers, role models and authority figures to their students. “Classrooms where there are expectations and teacher behaviours that support a safe, respectful and positive learning environment go a long way in enhancing intergroup relations.”<sup>4</sup>

### Parent Capacity at Chartwell School

Chartwell Elementary School (SD 45 West Vancouver), a K-7 school, educates approximately 270 students from 37 nations each year. Ten per cent of the students are international students, and the school is also recognized for its success with students with special needs. Located in an affluent neighbourhood, the school faces a number of challenges, said former principal Christie Whitley. It has a high transient rate because families frequently move around the world. Attendance is an issue because children travel with their families. The percentage of single parents is high as often one parent is working in another part of the world.

The Parent Advisory Council (PAC), aware of families’ increasing isolation and the lack of sense of community in the neighbourhood, decided to make the school the centre of the community. They knew it was important for children to have a sense of community. They also knew it was important for parents new to the city and the country to understand and be part of their children’s learning. The PAC organized a Multi-Cultural Committee and hosted “*funraisers*,” such as Halloween and Valentine dances, a welcome barbecue and opportunities for parents to join in focus groups to learn about education in Canada. They recognized cultural holidays and staff worked with students to do “family grouping” activities every six weeks to honour different cultural holidays and traditions.

In the first year of the School Planning Council (SPC), the parent representatives asked to target greater integration of cultural groups on the playground. The SPC decided that its first goal would be “to honour diversity and defend human rights.” They chose this part of the Social Responsibility Performance Standard because of the level of cultural understanding within the school.

Staff and parents developed a comprehensive plan to work with students and parents. Over the next three years, the plan evolved. Staff developed a diversity conference supported by parents. All families in the school were involved in a major art project designed to honour play throughout the world. The project resulted in a beautiful



**Many parents extend their involvement from supporting their own child to supporting all children in the school. Through their PACs and DPACs, these parents can create a network of support for all parents and welcome them into the school community.**

marble mural by the front door of the school that shows the diversity of the “Chartwell family.”

The next community project included both the social responsibility and literacy goals. Each family worked with their children and provided family stories that represented the virtues of hope and courage. The stories raised awareness among students, staff and parents of the human values shared by the families regardless of race and culture.

“The Get Along Gang”, a group of mothers, met each week to learn about each other’s countries, traditions, foods and roles played by women. They also helped new English Language learners. These parents began to reach out individually to welcome new parents into the school. They introduced them to the academic and behavioural norms of the school and their new community. Loneliness was broken down, and the community shared a deeper understanding of Canadian educational philosophy. A sense of personal identity was restored to families separated from homeland and culture.

Whitley said the Chartwell PAC, SPC and staff gave students a sound foundation for success. They created a place where parents could meet and participate in community, where they could reach out confidently for help and assistance, where they were able to build on their skills to meet the needs of their family and where they could be learners and accepted for their contributions.

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## The Parent Advisory Council (PAC)

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Parents contribute to the life and energy in schools in many ways including their involvement in the Parent Advisory Council (PAC). Every parent can belong to and participate in the PAC. Every parent has a vote and a voice in the PAC.

The PAC’s constitution outlines its mandate to represent parents and focus on the best interests of all students in the school. PACs must make bylaws, in consultation with the principal, to govern their meetings and the business and conduct of their affairs. One of the bylaws includes how parents in the school elect a PAC executive to represent them. Parents have the right, through the PAC executive, to give advice to the staff, school and school board about any matter relating to the school that is not the responsibility of the School Planning Council (SPC). The PAC gives input to the SPC through the parents it elects to the SPC.

The PAC executive organizes ways for parents to meet to discuss school issues of interest and concern to parents and give input to the SPC. The principal may attend the meetings and offer information that helps parents

in their discussions. The executive works closely with the principal. They develop a respectful working relationship that enables the PAC to support the school in a positive way and address parent concerns when they arise.

The PAC executive relies on the help of many parents to plan and run different activities in the school to support students, parents and staff.

The PAC members may elect a parent by secret ballot to represent the PAC at the District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC). The DPAC representative takes the PAC's issues and ideas to the DPAC meeting for discussion and action where necessary.

The PAC also elects three parents by secret ballot to represent parents on the SPC. One of the parents elected must be a member of the PAC executive. These parents provide the parents' views to the SPC, so PACs set time on their agenda for those discussions. The SPC representatives also keep the PAC informed about what is happening at the SPC and how the SPC considered parent views in the development and review of the school plan.

The PAC may choose to join the BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC). (See page 17).

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### Connecting Elementary and Secondary School Parents

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When families left Tumbler Ridge (SD 59 Peace River South) to find work elsewhere, it meant the closure of one elementary school and small enrollments in the single elementary and secondary schools in town.

There was no PAC at the secondary school, and parents of children in the elementary (K-6) and secondary schools (7-12) saw benefits in combining the parent communities. Coming together has helped the elementary parents understand more about the high school and encouraged them to stay involved in some way at the secondary level, PAC chair Linda Helm said. With school enrollments of about 190 and 180 students, there is also a larger pool of parents to draw on to support the schools. The PAC now is focusing on overcoming the childcare challenges that prevent elementary parents from being involved by providing care in the high school gym. This is also giving high school students opportunities to volunteer and connect with young children in their community.

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## The District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC)

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The *School Act* says PACs can form a District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC) to represent them to the school board. The DPAC is the collective voice of parents, through member PACs, in the school district.

The DPAC also develops a constitution and bylaws to guide their activities. A DPAC executive, elected from the PAC representatives, represents the views of the PACs and provides advice to the board about any matter relating to education in the school district. This includes advice on the school board's accountability contract with the Ministry of Education.

The superintendent or someone chosen by the superintendent and school board trustees may attend DPAC meetings. Often, they provide current information about the school district, answer questions and hear parent views.

The DPAC supports the role of the PACs by providing information and education and actively seeks PAC input before providing advice to the school board. Being part of a DPAC gives PACs the chance to talk about what is happening throughout the district. When an issue affects many students in the district, the DPAC raises the issue with the school board and district staff and they work together to find a solution. This requires the DPAC to have an understanding of the policies and processes used in the school district.

For example, a PAC or DPAC may hear of parent concerns about the fairness of a school board policy. The DPAC can seek more information about the concern and if necessary, request a review of the policy. DPAC members often sit on school district committees to represent parents' views and concerns.

The DPAC may choose to join BCCPAC. Some DPACs also choose to participate in the BCCPAC Advocacy Project (See page 24).

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### Using Technology to Overcome Meeting Challenges

Unsafe winter driving conditions as well as a three-hour drive from one end of the district to the other created a serious challenge to meeting as a DPAC in Southeast Kootenay School District (SD 5). About six years ago, the DPAC decided to meet the challenge by using video-conferencing for meetings. In the beginning, the equipment didn't always work and people found it hard to get used to talking to a big screen, said Cheryl McCann, DPAC President. Attendance increased, though, and the school district now supports the DPAC by providing the equipment and a technician free of charge.

To make video-conferencing work for them, the DPAC finds it has to be more organized—no chance to hand out last minute papers when everyone is in a different location! Four locations (Cranbrook, Fernie, Sparwood and Elkford) can be video-conferenced, and the DPAC hopes to include Jaffray this year so all parents have the opportunity to attend the meeting in their own community. Each of the communities represented by the DPAC face different challenges and while video-conferencing may be less personable than the traditional face-to-face meetings, the reps are experiencing the benefits of sharing information and understanding the district as a whole—with less time on the road.

## What Works for PACs and DPACs

Focusing on the best interests of all students, supporting all parents to be involved and informed, helping parents to advocate for their children, advising the staff, school and district—these are critical and important roles for PACs and DPACs.

Every PAC and DPAC in the province is unique, reflecting the needs and diversity of the students and parents in their schools and district. PACs and DPACs find that they can be more successful when they:

- develop and work within constitutions and bylaws that clearly state their mandate
- understand and respect the roles and responsibilities of the partner groups
- develop and maintain respectful relationships with students, parents, PACs, school and district staff and the community
- encourage activities that support all levels of parent involvement
- identify the challenges to parent involvement and work with staff to overcome them
- help parents to understand the policies and procedures in their schools and district and work with partner groups to make the information readily available
- deal fairly and non-judgementally with parent concerns
- develop communication and conflict resolution skills within the PAC/DPAC, including a code of ethics and a fair way to deal with breaches of the code
- respect the privacy rights of students, parents and staff



### Some of the ways PACs and DPACs are communicating with parents:

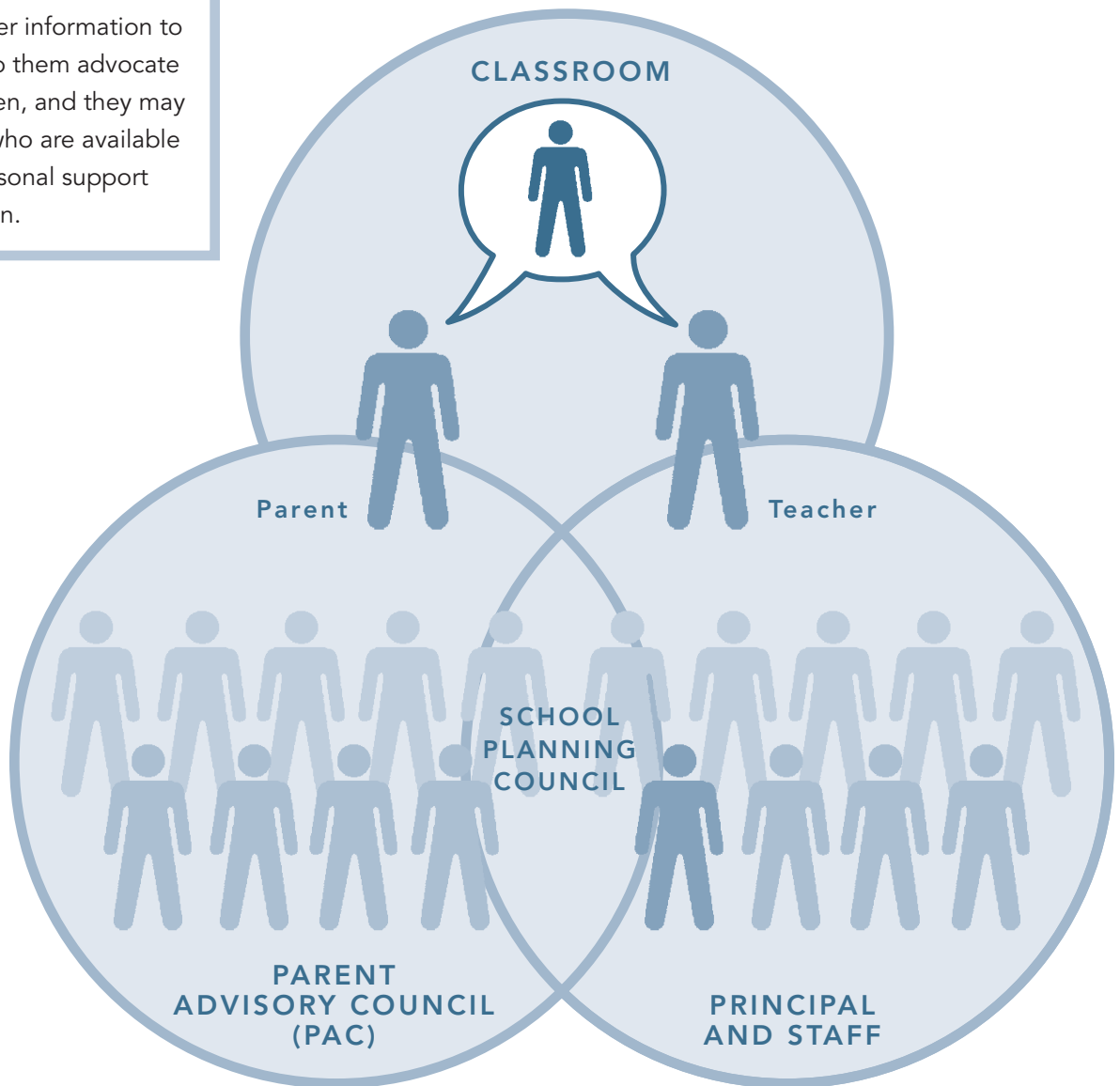
- Personal contact
- Print and electronic newsletters
- Meeting in different communities within the school district
- Conference calls, on-line audio and video conferencing, email
- Websites
- Translating their materials into different languages: Vancouver DPAC has published PAC 101, A Simple Look at the Parent Advisory Council in English, Chinese, Punjabi and Vietnamese.  
[www.vsb.bc.ca/parents/families/DPAC/Goldmine+PAC+handbook.htm](http://www.vsb.bc.ca/parents/families/DPAC/Goldmine+PAC+handbook.htm)



PAC and DPAC meetings are not the place to discuss the personal problems parents have with their children or with specific staff or schools. However, if many parents and students in the school or district share a problem that does not involve individual school staff, PACs and DPACs can work with staff to solve the problem in the best interests of all the students. Both PACs and DPACs can offer information to parents to help them advocate for their children, and they may have parents who are available to provide personal support and information.

- communicate with parents in a variety of ways, including in language(s) and terms that can be understood by all parents
- understand and respect the diversity of parents in schools and districts
- encourage other parents to take on leadership roles and seek parents who reflect the diversity in schools and districts
- network provincially with other PACs/DPACs through BCCPAC
- acknowledge and celebrate what is working well.

### Working Together – Parents and School



## The School Planning Council (SPC)

The School Planning Council (SPC) is another way that parents work together with staff to find ways to meet the needs of all students in their school.

The *School Act* says every school must have an SPC. Members of the council work collaboratively to develop a school plan to improve student achievement. The council consists of the principal, three parents elected by the parents and a teacher<sup>5</sup> elected by the teachers in the school. Parents and teachers hold their positions for one year, but may be re-elected. For schools that include grades 10-12, the principal appoints a student representative from one of those grades. Parents or guardians employed by any school board are not eligible to represent parents on the council. Many SPCs seek and consider the input of support staff and others.

The SPC consults with people in the school community to hear their perspectives about student needs. They also consider information they have collected about student achievement from the classroom, school and district. Members meet to discuss different perspectives and work together to come to agreement about what the school plan should include. They talk about how the school will use its resources to support educational programs that will meet the goals they have decided.

Members decide how the meeting is run and how to deal with disagreements if they arise. The principal provides collaborative leadership and ensures the right kind of information helps develop the school plan. Members find it helpful to have a code of ethics. The SPC is not the place to discuss confidential information about students, parents or staff.

During the year, the SPC looks at the progress the school has made toward its goals. The council makes changes to the school plan where needed to meet the needs of students. The council follows a one-year cycle within a timeline set by the school board.



### The school board:

- consults with the SPC about the resources, staff, educational programs and services it gives to the school
- consults with the SPC regarding matters relating to the school that are included in the board's accountability contract with the ministry
- decides on a timeline for school plans
- is responsible for maintaining policies and procedures to support SPCs in every school
- approves the school plan, approves it with changes or rejects it
- may provide training for SPC members in how to work as a team and how to use the kinds of information about student achievement
- may appoint someone to a vacant position.

## BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils

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For more information about PACs, DPACs and SPCs, talk to someone in your school or district. BCCPAC has published *The BCCPAC Leadership Manual*, a resource to help establish and maintain school and district parent advisory councils. Contact BCCPAC at 604-687-4433 or 1-866-529-4397.

Many PACs and DPACs join BCCPAC to ensure a collective parent voice at the provincial level. BCCPAC talks about members' views to the leaders of other provincial education partner groups including teachers, support staff, principals, superintendents, secretary-treasurers, trustees and the Ministry of Education. BCCPAC also helps PACs, SPCs and DPACs in their roles as advisors in their schools and districts.

The Ministry of Education recognizes BCCPAC as the collective voice of parents of children in BC public schools. BCCPAC represents its member PACs and DPACs on provincial committees dealing with a range of issues, including student assessment, Aboriginal education, curriculum and safety. Just as a principal consults with the PAC on school issues and the school board with the DPAC on district issues, the ministry consults with BCCPAC on issues of provincial importance. BCCPAC is a partner at the Learning Roundtable, a forum for education partners to discuss critical issues with the Premier and Minister of Education related to learning conditions in the public school system, such as class size and class composition.

*“Advocacy is essential if fairness principles are to be effectively implemented in our school system. Experience has taught us that without effective advocates the concerns of children are easily overlooked. School and District Parent Advisory Councils are vital mechanisms for the provision of child advocacy within the school system. When operating effectively, these councils can provide important support to individual children and their parents in efforts to resolve conflicts that inevitably arise in such a complex system.”*

Dulcie McCallum,  
former BC Ombudsman, 1995

## Advocacy in Public Schools

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Educators and parents are committed to meeting the needs of children. Sometimes parents are unsure about where they “fit” when it comes to speaking up for their children. School district policies and processes can help. Educators can let parents know about policies and processes and help parents understand and use them.

Advocacy means speaking up in support of oneself or others.

It is important to recognize that parents:

- are their child's natural advocate
- can make sure their child's rights, needs and opinions are respected
- can make sure that decisions affecting their child are made fairly.

Together, parents and educators can help children through difficult times and teach them to speak up for themselves.

In the Fair Schools report, the Ombudsman talks about how schools can meet the challenge of being fair to students. Advocacy in public schools upholds the principles from the Fair Schools report:

1. All children and youth have the right to be valued and to be treated with respect and dignity.
2. All children and youth have the right to a fair and equitable education.
3. All children and youth have the right to receive appropriate advocacy supports.
4. All children and youth have the right to participate in decisions that affect them, to express their views and to have them carefully considered.
5. All children and youth have the right to the benefit of the fundamental human rights provided in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
6. All children and youth have the right to a safe physical and emotional environment.
7. All children and youth have the right to receive appropriate programs from appropriately trained and properly motivated staff.
8. All children and youth should have the opportunity to access publicly funded services in their home communities or as close to their home as possible.

Office of the Ombudsman, Fair Schools Report, Report 35, May 1995.

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## What Parents Can Do to Help Their Child

Adapted from *Speaking Up! A parent guide to advocating for students in public schools*



Ask if the PAC, DPAC or school has a copy of the self-help guide “Problem-Solving.” It is available individually, and it is included in *Speaking Up! A parent guide to advocating for students in public schools*. Copies are also available from BCCPAC.



### ■ For more information

The school library, principal, PAC or DPAC may have copies of *Speaking Up! A parent guide to advocating for students in public schools*.

The guide provides:

- an outline of parents’ rights and responsibilities.
- a guide to working through a problem.
- an approach for dealing with parents’ fears.
- information about the public school system.
- tools to help parents stay on track.
- places to look for more help.

Guides are also available from BCCPAC. Contact [info@bccpac.bc.ca](mailto:info@bccpac.bc.ca) or visit the website at [www.bccpac.bc.ca](http://www.bccpac.bc.ca)

### 1 Decide when to act

When you believe something is happening at school that is affecting your child, you may need to act.

### 2 Listen to your child

To be able to help, you need to listen carefully and consider your child’s views.

As children mature, a parent’s role changes from representing them to helping them build the skills they need to represent themselves. The age and needs of your child will determine how you are involved. Being there to support your child is appropriate at any age.

### 3 Identify the problem

It is very difficult to solve a problem if you don’t know what it is!

- Is your child being bullied?
- Are you concerned about your child’s progress in school?
- Do you think your child is being mistreated by a staff member?

### 4 Prepare

It is important to plan your approach to the problem. If you need support, talk to someone you trust. Respect your child’s and others’ right to privacy by avoiding unnecessary or public discussion.

### 5 Learn how your school district deals with problems

Each school district has written policies and procedures to determine what and how things happen and to deal with problems. Some schools and school districts have brochures or handbooks describing the steps to take when parents have a problem.

In most cases:

1. You speak first to the person with whom you have the problem (e.g., teacher, teacher’s assistant).
2. If you are unable to solve the problem there, you then speak to the person’s supervisor; most often that is the principal.
3. If you still can’t solve the problem, you move up to the next level of authority in the district.

## 6 Take notes

If you have someone with you in a meeting who is able, ask the person to take notes. Record the dates of meetings, phone calls, who you speak to, etc., and keep copies of everything you send or receive.

## 7 Commit to solving the problem

Work to solve the problem using the steps outlined in your school district policy.

- Assume the best of others.
- Face difficult situations with courage.
- If things get difficult, look for more information and support rather than give up.
- Learn who is willing and able to make the changes necessary and share your ideas with them.

## 8 How will the problem be solved?

Be flexible and open-minded about possible solutions. Focus on what will solve the problem for your child; the solution might be very different from what you expected. Explore how possible solutions will work for your child.

## 9 Decide whether you need a meeting

Often you find that you need to meet with the people who have the ability to help solve the problem. A meeting that includes the right people can be helpful in finding possible solutions and developing a plan.

## 10 Set up a meeting

Once you have identified the person you should talk to, call them to let them know what you want to discuss and to set up a meeting. Let the person know if someone will be attending the meeting with you. Ask who else will be at the meeting. If you are asked to attend a meeting by the school or district, don't be afraid to ask questions.

## 11 Stay involved

At the end of the meeting, it is a good idea to quickly go over where you have reached agreement and confirm the action and follow-up plan. Make sure you and your child are part of any on-going plans. If one solution does not work out, request another—plans must be workable to be able to meet your child's needs.



Ask if the PAC, DPAC or school has a copy of the self-help guide "Meeting Survival." It is available individually, and it is included in *Speaking Up! A parent guide to advocating for students in public schools*. Copies are also available from BCCPAC.



*“Students and parents who learn to advocate for themselves gain an understanding of their rights and responsibilities. They develop the courage to stand up for themselves and know how to approach problem-solving in an appropriate way.”*

Speaking Up! A parent guide to advocating for students in public schools 2005

## Dealing with Problems

Most districts use a process like this. Parents can find information about the district policy to deal with problems by contacting their school, district office, PAC or DPAC, or by checking the district website. Please make sure the policy on the website is the most recent version.

### 1 Step One

Discuss the problem with the person involved: e.g., teacher, teacher’s assistant. Problems are often solved here.

IF NOT SOLVED

### 2 Step Two

Discuss the problem with the employee’s supervisor, most often that is the principal.

IF NOT SOLVED

### 3 Step Three

Discuss the problem with the person next in authority. That person may be the director of instruction, assistant superintendent, or another person named in policy.

IF NOT SOLVED

### 4 Step Four

Discuss the problem with the person next in authority. That person may be the superintendent.

IF NOT SOLVED

### 5 Step Five

Students or parents may appeal.

## The School Staff Representative

Sometimes a teacher will take the school staff representative (staff rep) to the meeting. The BCTF Members' Guide outlines three main roles for the staff rep.

**Communicator:** The staff rep is the liaison between the school staff and the local union office. The rep holds meetings with teachers in the school about union issues and provides their ideas to the local union's elected officers. The rep also provides teachers with news and messages from the local and provincial union offices.

**Advocate:** The staff rep is the advocate for teachers in their school in matters regarding the collective agreement. Section 12 of the Labour Relations Code says the union has a duty of fair representation.

**Teacher leader and union organizer:** The staff rep ensures that democratic processes are followed, that teacher concerns are communicated to the principal and that teachers have a process to voice their opinions and recommendations on professional and union matters.

### Advocacy for students works when:

- advocacy is seen by all partners as a way to help people solve problems
- school and district policies and processes are fair, user-friendly and easily accessible
- parents are encouraged to bring issues regarding their child to the school's attention
- students are encouraged and supported in acting as self-advocates
- parents are encouraged to advocate on behalf of their children and seek support and help when necessary
- parents and students build advocacy skills
- PACs and DPACs fulfill their roles as systems advocates and provide help to individual parents
- the dignity, due process, privacy and confidentiality of all partners is respected throughout the advocacy process
- parent advocates and all of those involved abide by their respective codes of ethics.



Parents need to think about whom they will choose to take to a meeting for support. Do they need someone who can take accurate notes? Are they confident the person can respect the privacy of everybody involved and will not make matters worse?



### A Parent's Story

"I had a problem with my child's school and didn't know what to do or where to turn. What helped? It was incredibly helpful to find someone who was willing to take the time to listen to my story without judgement. It was really helpful to be given loads of information about the school system. I was able to understand what I could expect from the school and how I could bring forward my concern."



### What Works for Parents and Students

1. The appeal process is provided to parents and students at the time the decision is made.
2. The appeal process says that parents and students can bring someone for support.
3. Information is provided about how the appeal process works, such as:
  - who will be there
  - how long it will take
  - how the final decision will be made
  - what information will be considered.
4. Parents and students are encouraged to ask questions so they understand the process.
5. The appeal process is:
  - accessible
  - fair
  - timely
  - user-friendly
  - clearly focused on resolving issues.
6. The appeal process addresses a parent's or student's fear of retribution.
7. The appeal process ensures respect for all individuals involved.
8. The appeal process provides for follow-up communication.

## Finding Information

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Sometimes parents are tempted to skip the steps in the process for solving problems in their district. They may not know that a policy or process exists. They may not know that there is other information they need. Parents can find information in many places. They can ask the school secretary, teachers, the principal or vice-principal or members of the PAC or DPAC Executive for help. They can check the school or district website for information about district policies. Many schools publish the complaints process and other information about school and district policies in a school handbook. The school may post information on a bulletin board. Parents can also call a school trustee who can explain the process for solving problems. If parents have a complaint about the action or behaviour (conduct) of a member of the BC College of Teachers, they can call the college for information. (See page 72).

## Appeal

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There are times when an individual parent or student disagrees with a decision made by a staff member. The following information is from *Speaking Up! A parent guide to advocating for children in public schools*.

Section 11 of the *School Act* gives parents and/or students the right to have the school board review decisions school staff make, or fail to make, that “significantly affects the education, health or safety of a student.” Section 11 also says every district must have an appeal procedure.

The *School Act* says school boards can make rules about appeals. Appeal procedures are different in every district and may be called policies or bylaws. There may be certain steps and timelines to follow. Make sure you have a copy of your district's most recent appeal procedure and any forms that might go with it.

When you appeal, ask that your appeal be heard as soon as possible. Request time to fully state your case, and ask to be present to hear the information the staff member gives. Ask questions about how the appeal hearing will be conducted:

- Who will be there?
- Will there be a chance to ask questions of others?
- How much time do you have to present your information?

A school board appeal is the final step within the district process. If you think you were treated unfairly by the school board, your next step would be to file a complaint with the Office of the Ombudsman. See Finding More Information, page 71.

## BCCPAC Advocacy Project

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Parents can look to trusted friends, family members, parent leaders and staff for information and support. They can also find information and support from the BCCPAC Advocacy Project. The project began in 1994 to help parents advocate for the best interests of their children and solve problems in a positive way.

In its first year, the project identified the barriers parents faced in trying to solve problems in the public school system. Since then, the project has provided education and training to parent leaders in the province dedicated to helping parents advocate for their children. Some DPACs have parent leaders who can help parents. Parents can call a member of their DPAC Executive for more information.

The project is grounded in the needs, rights and entitlements of children and youth. Many of these rights and entitlements as they relate to public schools are outlined in the Fair Schools Report published in 1995 by the Office of the Ombudsman. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the *School Act* and its accompanying regulations and ministerial orders, the Ministry for Children and Family Development and other information published by the Office of the Ombudsman support the foundation for advocacy in BC's public school system.

*The Royal Commission's Report on Parents in Education recommended that:*

*“Mechanisms be established for defining the roles and relationships among students, parents and educators to set up processes which enable advocacy on behalf of students and parents at the provincial, district, and school levels.”*

Parents in Education, “Report of the Working Group on Parents’ Role: Rights and Responsibilities,” Report 2, April 1988

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- 1 Henderson, Anne T., Karen L. Mapp, A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement, Annual Synthesis. 2002
  - 2 Epstein, Joyce L., L. Coates, KC Salinas, M.G. Sanders and B.S. Simon. *School, Family and Community y Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action*. Corwin Press. 1997
  - 3 Renihan, Frederick I. and Patrick J. Renihan. “Encouraging Meaningful Parental Involvement” The School Trustee, February 1994
  - 4 Wong, Eric D., *Anti-racism Toolkit Activity Set Educational Activities for Use in Workshops and Classrooms*. First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2002
  - 5 At the time of publication, members of the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation (BCTF) had voted at their 2006 Annual General Meeting to withdraw from participating in the School Planning Councils. PACs and DPACs are encouraged to have a conversation about this decision with their school staff and/or with their local teachers’ association.

# 2 people and relationships

*Relationships can mean “a connection or association; a state of affairs existing between those having relations or dealings.”*

The Concise Oxford Dictionary. Ninth Edition. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1995

*“The best interests of the child shall be the guiding principle of those responsible for his education and guidance; that responsibility lies in the first place with parents.”*

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child, Article 7, 1959



■ For more information on legislation, please see **Section 5 Governance and Legislation.**

## Supporting students’ success is a shared responsibility between home and school.

Parents have a responsibility to care for their children and participate in their children’s education. Schools have a responsibility to provide a quality learning environment that is responsive to, and inclusive of, all students.

Open and respectful communication between parents and educators helps parents understand the different roles and responsibilities of people in the public education system. It is important for parents to know what they can expect from educators and to let educators know what the family can offer to support their children’s education.

In public education, there are relationships defined in legislation, and there are relationships that develop as parents interact with the people who work with their children. The public education system can be overwhelming to many parents. Educators play an important part in helping parents understand how the system works and encouraging their involvement in their children’s education.

Success for students is enhanced when parents and school and district staff pay attention to their relationships with each other. By understanding and respecting the differences in their roles and responsibilities, parents and staff can create a safe, caring place where students and parents can express their views and all voices are heard.

## Teachers

Teachers recognize the benefits of developing positive and respectful relationships with the parents of children in their classroom. Parents can provide teachers with important information about their children that will help the teacher in meeting their child’s needs. Teachers can explain the work they do and help parents provide support for their children at home. They can offer parents a variety of ways to become involved in the classroom and the school. When teachers and parents work together, children are supported in their learning.

## The teacher:

- provides teaching and other educational services
- evaluates each student's intellectual, human, social and career development
- provides regular reports to parents on students' school progress
- encourages the regular attendance of students
- ensures students understand and comply with the school codes of conduct, rules and policies
- helps with supervision of students at school and at school functions
- maintains the records required by the minister, the board and the school principal.

## Other School Staff

A school may hire non-teaching staff in a variety of positions. One example is a teacher assistant<sup>6</sup> or a paraprofessional who works with the teacher to support students with special needs. While teachers are responsible for designing, implementing and evaluating the educational program of the student with special needs, teacher assistants help them in this responsibility. Both the teacher and the teacher assistant facilitate the inclusion of students with special needs in the classroom. Together, they encourage the student to become an independent learner and member of the classroom, school and community. They create a classroom environment where all students are respected and valued.

Multi-cultural and Aboriginal workers, school counsellors, supervisory and clerical staff, school bus drivers and custodians also play a role in supporting students and the school.



Teachers and support staff in public schools belong to unions. The British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) represents all teachers in public schools in the province; a number of unions represent support staff, although the majority belongs to the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE). Union contracts should not take away the rights of a parent or a child's rights as a student or human being.<sup>7</sup> However, parts of these contracts can affect how the principal or district staff make decisions and act on them.

*“Developing a strong, positive relationship with your child's teacher works in everyone's favour. When parents and teachers communicate well and work together, everyone comes out ahead—the student, the parents, and the teacher.”*

BC Teachers' Federation  
[www.bctf.ca/parents/communication/StrongTeacherRelationships.html](http://www.bctf.ca/parents/communication/StrongTeacherRelationships.html)



■ Parents can visit [www.bctf.ca/parents/communication/StrongTeacherRelationships.html](http://www.bctf.ca/parents/communication/StrongTeacherRelationships.html) for tips on building a relationship with their child's teacher.



Students with special needs have disabilities of an intellectual, physical, sensory, emotional or behavioural nature, or have a learning disability or have exceptional gifts or talents.

## School Principals

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Principals have an important leadership responsibility to support communication between the home and school. They nurture the conditions that build relationships between parents and teachers. They have a key role in encouraging a positive relationship with their PACs. Principals spend a large amount of time interacting with students, parents, teachers and the local community. They provide educational leadership in the school, to the SPC and in the district. Principals have the right to exercise professional judgment in managing their schools in accordance with specified duties and powers. They work with students, parents, teachers and school support staff to develop and maintain a positive and safe learning environment.

### The school principal:

- may attend PAC meetings
- provides information and consults with the SPC about class size and composition
- is the person to whom teachers and other staff report
- works with district to hire staff
- administers and supervises the school
- exercises paramount authority concerning student discipline according to board policy
- may suspend students according to board policy
- is responsible for general conduct of students in all school and school-sponsored activities
- may set policy that is consistent with district and provincial guidelines
- evaluates and writes reports on teachers
- may be assisted by a vice-principal
- may teach in a classroom.

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### Professional Judgement

Educators use their professional judgement when they carry out their responsibilities. When educators make decisions using their professional judgement, they are:

- drawing on their education, knowledge and experience
- following the Principles of Natural Justice (See page 36). For example, they consider the needs of the student and the facts in the situation
- able to show parents and others how they used their professional judgement to make the decision.

## School District Superintendent

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Superintendents are responsible for the overall operation of education services in the district. They provide education leadership to all staff in the district. Their relationship with their school boards is key to carrying out the vision for public education in the district. Superintendents also develop a respectful working relationship with their DPACs and other education partners in the district. Depending on the size of the school district, assistant superintendents and directors of instruction may assist the superintendent.

### The superintendent:

- reports to the school board
- may attend DPAC meetings
- advises and assists the school board
- is responsible for general organization, administration, supervision and evaluation of all educational programs
- is the person to whom the principal reports
- supervises and directs education staff
- may suspend students according to board policy
- may suspend employees who, in the opinion of the superintendent, pose a threat to the students' welfare
- may report at any time on the work of a teacher and the learning situation in a teacher's class, or the work of a principal, vice principal or director of instruction and must deliver a copy of the report to that person
- reports to BC College of Teachers on the work of members of the college
- assists the Minister of Education as required.



**"BCSSA members must be skilled collaborators who can rally all available resources to support better education for all children living in our multicultural society."**

*Dimensions of Practice for Superintendents, Assistant Superintendents, and Directors of Instruction or Equivalent.*  
British Columbia School Superintendents' Association (BCSSA)

## School Board

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A school board's most important responsibility is keeping the focus of all school district decisions on the best educational interests of students.<sup>8</sup>

Residents in a school district elect individuals to the school board every three years. A school district may consist of many communities. As a board, trustees represent the diverse values, interests and expectations of all the people who live in their communities. They are accountable to their





**Some examples of school board policy include:**

- parent involvement
- School Planning Councils
- student conduct and discipline
- field trips.

**Many school districts have posted their policies on their district websites.**

**Please call the local school board office to make sure the policies on the website are the current versions.**

*“Student achievement is the focus of all school board decisions, policies and actions. It is the key work of every school board. Improving student achievement and maintaining a consistently high level of student achievement is the school board’s first and highest priority.”*

Key Work Resources. British Columbia School Trustees Association (BCSTA). November 2005

communities and to the Minister of Education for improvements in student achievement. The province decides every year how much funding a board will receive to provide programs and services to students. The board has a duty to govern in a fiscally responsible and cost-effective manner.

The school board’s power is set out in legislation. It is a corporate body, meaning no trustee can independently exercise the power of the board. School boards must govern districts and their schools in accordance with the *School Act* and its accompanying regulations and orders. The board has the authority to make policies. These policies must be consistent with provincial legislation and policy. The board may delegate some policy-making to superintendents, but the school board is ultimately responsible for the policies that guide the district.

The board consults with students, parents, staff and the community on many topics. Examples of those topics include policy, budget, school closures, the accountability contract and others that affect children and youth in the community. Some school boards assign one or more trustees to keep in contact with PACs and the DPAC in their districts. The school board holds public meetings, and there is time on the agenda for the public to have input. Trustees are accessible to the public and can be reached through their local school board office.

**The school board:**

- sets local policies for the effective and efficient operation of schools
- enacts policies governing student conduct and discipline
- employs the staff necessary for school district operations
- establishes conditions of employment for employees, within the framework of collective bargaining for unionized staff
- prepares and approves the school district’s operating budget and capital plans
- hears appeals from students and parents where a staff decision significantly affects a student
- approves local courses and resource materials for use in the school district
- approves annual school plans
- prepares the accountability contract on improving student achievement
- acquires, owns and disposes of school property and makes decisions on school facilities.

## Ministry of Education

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In Canada, education is the responsibility of the provinces. In BC, the Minister of Education is responsible to the BC Legislature for K-12 education. Through the *School Act*, the minister presides over and administers the public education system. The minister also has responsibility for libraries, literacy, early learning and independent schools. The minister sets the education policy and direction for the province. The Deputy Minister is responsible for day-to-day operations of the ministry.

### The ministry:

- sets education standards on what students need to achieve
- develops policy and legislation to support the school system
- distributes funds to school districts
- develops provincial curriculum
- conducts provincial assessments of students' learning
- reports assessment and review results to the public
- conducts district reviews.

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6 A BCTF/CUPE Joint Paper, *Roles and Responsibilities of Teachers and Teacher Assistants*, <http://www.bctf.ca/education/InclusiveEd/TeacherTA-Roles/> Vancouver, April, 2001

7 *Summary of the Ombudsman's Suggestions*, Fair Schools Report No.35, Office of the Ombudsman, May, 1995, p. 36.

8 BC School Trustees Association, *Key Work Resources, The Guide to School Trusteeship in BC*, Vancouver, November, 2005

# 3 coming together

*“Public schools are the ideal place for our children to learn about democracy. We adults have the opportunity to demonstrate to children by example that dignity and respect are the cornerstone of any fair and equitable system.”*

Dulcie McCallum, Open Letter from the Ombudsman. Fair Schools. Public Report No. 35 May 1995

**Ask people who work or volunteer in schools why they are involved, and each person will have a different way of saying “to help students succeed.”**

They will also have a different way of describing what they think success for students looks like.

Public schools are places where people with different backgrounds, views and experiences come together. It is not surprising that there is a wide range of opinion about what student success looks like and how parents, educators and the community might work together to support it.

This shared vision—student success—is the foundation of the school as a learning community. Parents, at all levels of involvement, are part of the collaborative effort within the learning community to improve success for all students.

Schools and districts spend time nurturing the relationships and developing the processes necessary to help them achieve their vision. They consider how shared values lead to positive relationships, how leadership and collaboration contributes to students’ learning and how schools will know that what they are doing is working. Parents, and wherever possible, students, are included in these conversations.

## Values

Values are the moral and ethical priorities that guide people’s actions. Research shows that peoples and cultures around the world share the following values:<sup>9</sup>

- compassion
- fairness
- honesty
- responsibility
- respect.



**In BC, the professional organizations of educators have codes of ethics that guide their members. Many PACs and DPACs have also developed codes of ethics. In developing these codes, all of these organizations used shared values to bring their members together.**

Values shape the behaviour that people expect of themselves and of others. Learning communities talk about the values they believe contribute to a culture of trust and mutual support. In times of challenge or conflict, this commitment to their core values helps people maintain their relationships with each other.

Developing and maintaining a school culture of trust and mutual support involves:

- leadership and commitment from all groups in the school and district
- respect for each other
- open communication
- information-sharing
- respect for confidentiality
- civility
- integrity
- competence.

## Leadership

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In learning communities, schools and districts value “shared” or “distributed” leadership. Many more people are involved in the leadership activity and they bring different information, experience and skills to the table. Those in formal roles of leadership, i.e. superintendent, principal, vice-principal, help others develop and demonstrate their capacity as leaders. They support a collaborative environment where others can be creative in developing plans that serve the needs of students.

Many districts focus on strengthening leadership capacity within the schools and district. They often include parents when they offer leadership development opportunities. PACs, DPACs and BCCPAC also give parents information and support to help them develop their leadership skills so they can play an active role in their learning communities.



The BCSSA believes it is important to have “ethically fit” leaders in public education who can help school boards, principals and teachers in ethical decision-making. They believe that everything they do in this regard will ultimately affect the development, achievement and lives of students. BCSSA is supporting school districts to build capacity for ethical leadership within their organizations and communities.

For information about the Ethics in Education Initiative (EEI), visit [www.bcssa.org](http://www.bcssa.org)

*“Recent research on district leadership makes one point amply clear. Top-down bureaucratic management is being replaced by bottom-up executive leadership that encourages shared decision-making among school staff, community, business, and other stakeholders.”*

Dimensions of Practice for Superintendents, Assistant Superintendents, and Directors of Instruction or Equivalent. BCSSA



■ For more about teamwork, team roles and expectations, visit the Ministry of Education website: [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/spc/notesteamwork.pdf](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/spc/notesteamwork.pdf).

For other information on teamwork, visit Working on Teams at: <http://web.mit.edu/hr/oed/learn/teams/>

*“Any attempt to form genuine collaborations among school staff, parents, and community members must start with building relationships of respect. The building of relationships must be intentional and consistent.”*

Anne T. Henderson, Karen L. Mapp. 2002

## Teamwork

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A team is a group of people who have a clear purpose for coming together. Members understand and believe that thinking, planning, decisions and actions are better when they work together. The team is most effective when the members have a sense of accountability to each other and the team as a whole, share a commitment to what the team wants to achieve and how it will work together.

Three areas of attention<sup>10</sup> are important to attend to in group development and teamwork:

**Attention to Task:** The team is time and energy efficient. It decides how to operate, sets and maintains clear goals and criteria for success and keeps on task. It uses the right information to make decisions.

**Attention to Process:** Members pay attention to how the team is functioning. They develop an agenda for each meeting and follow agreed upon protocols and ground rules. Members take on different roles to help focus their efforts.

**Attention to Relationships:** Members feel safe and their participation and contribution is balanced. They recognize and honour the need for diversity and anticipate that productive disagreement is part of reaching for excellence.

## Collaboration

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Collaboration is an on-going process in which people work together toward a common goal, to solve a common problem or address a common concern. Coming together does not naturally lead to collaboration. To collaborate, individuals pay as much attention to developing a relationship with each other as they do to the work itself. Collaboration takes time and involves a new way of thinking and working with others.

When people agree to collaborate, they commit to:

- mutual trust and respect
- mutual goals
- sharing resources
- spending the time
- equally valuing each person's contribution
- sharing responsibility for participation and decision-making
- sharing accountability for outcomes.

Some of the benefits of collaboration include:

- building relationships
- opportunities for all to be heard
- more diversity in opinion
- better understanding of perspectives
- better decisions that are more likely to last
- more acceptance of the outcomes.

## Communication

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Communication skills help in building and maintaining relationships. They can help reduce the chances for conflict to take hold. Part of respecting others is about listening to understand their perspectives and needs. Everyone involved in the public education system has a responsibility to communicate well and help others communicate effectively.

*“Seek first to understand, then to be understood.”*

Stephen Covey

### Effective communicators:<sup>11</sup>

1. strive to put people at ease; they
  - keep their focus positive
  - promote trust and respect
  - work to improve relationships.
2. work to understand the other person’s views; they
  - put themselves in the other person’s shoes - what are their needs, interests, motivations?
  - ask open-ended questions
  - keep an open mind—avoid making judgments
  - encourage the speaker.
3. practice good listening skills; they
  - gain co-operation
  - show interest
  - listen for the main ideas
  - resist distractions
  - summarize.
4. think about what they want to say and how they want to say it; they
  - use understandable language, avoid acronyms
  - always treat the other person with respect.



**The Royal Commission's  
Report on Parents in  
Education states:**

**“Mechanisms for the  
resolution of conflict should  
be established and clearly  
delineated at the provincial,  
district and school levels.”**

Parents in Education, Report of the  
Working Group on Parent's Role:  
Rights and Responsibilities,  
Report 2 April 1988

*“Students, parents, teachers,  
teacher aides and all others  
whose work impacts students  
must have the opportunity to  
be heard in decisions that  
affect them.”*

Fair Schools. Public Report No. 35.  
May 1995

## Conflict

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At some time, in any relationship, conflict can occur. Conflict is not always negative, although it often makes people feel uncomfortable or react defensively. When people are able to discuss why they see things differently, they often learn important information that helps them make better decisions.

The chances of resolving conflict improve when:

- all persons feel respected and heard
- the issue is taken seriously
- the process to hear the issue is considered fair and unbiased
- the person(s) ultimately responsible for resolving the conflict are respectful, consistent and genuinely sincere in their responses.

One of the ways to reduce the potential for conflict includes modelling the principles of fairness and natural justice (see page 36) and ensuring those principles and processes are readily available. When people feel heard, they are more willing to consider new ways of resolving the conflict.

When conflict between people or groups becomes common, it is important to consider whether it is a sign of a larger problem.

- Is the leadership addressing the conflict or using effective conflict resolution skills?
- Is there a supportive environment for conflict resolution?
- Is there accountability for communication and conflict resolution skills?
- Are skills training and resources available to build and maintain effective relationships?

When education partners value relationships of mutual trust and support, they can maintain their relationship and continue to work with each other even in those times when conflict cannot be resolved.

## Decision-making

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Every day, people in the public school system make decisions. The way decisions are made depends on the issue, whom it affects and who has the responsibility and authority to make it. When the decision affects an individual or a group, school districts have processes in place to give those people affected by the decision the chance to influence the outcome of the decision. Those processes are found in school board policies.

Schools and districts use a variety of ways to involve parents and others in decision-making.

### Principles of Natural Justice

1. The right to be heard and present evidence. A person should not be adversely affected by a decision-maker without being able to put forward a case that is relevant to his or her own concerns.
2. The right to know the facts upon which the decision-maker based the decision.
3. A decision-maker should not be biased. A person should therefore have a right to have a matter determined by an unbiased adjudicator.

Guidelines for Investigators of Pacific Ombudsman, September 1993

*“School board decisions take the form of plans, policies and budgets—all of which need to be aligned in order to achieve the vision for public education held by the community and defined by the school board.”*

Key Work Resources. British Columbia School Trustees Association. November, 2005

### Consensus

Consensus decisions<sup>12</sup> are useful because all members of the team agree to support the group’s decision, even when the decision is not their first preference.

Making decisions by consensus:

- involves everyone and incorporates all ideas
- generates commitment to action and to each other
- helps teams work together in a positive way to develop mutual trust and understanding
- helps identify areas of agreement
- facilitates discussion
- provides an opportunity to explore how each person feels about an issue – Information that is important when designing an eventual action plan.

Coming to consensus usually depends on everyone in the group being satisfied that their concerns have been expressed and considered. Everyone has had “their say.” More time may be required for discussion, exploring ideas and considering all the options; however, members will support the decisions made. Moving ahead with the decision or change will be much smoother than if members of the group oppose the solution/decision.



#### Finding more information

The internet is a source for information about decision-making, conflict resolution and management and working with teams.

Some examples are:

- Basics of Consensus at [www.ic.org/nica/Process/Consensusbasics.htm](http://www.ic.org/nica/Process/Consensusbasics.htm)
- Interpersonal Relationships and Conflict Resolution at <http://www.ic.org/nica/Process/Relation.html>
- On Conflict and Consensus, a handbook on formal consensus decision-making at [www.anarres.org.au/essays/ocac.htm](http://www.anarres.org.au/essays/ocac.htm)
- Working on Teams at <http://web.mit.edu/hr/oed/learn/teams/>



## Advising

Parents may advise the school or district through their PAC or DPAC. To advise means “to give an opinion or counsel, or recommend a plan or course of action...it is different in meaning from “instruct” or “persuade.”<sup>13</sup> BCCPAC suggests that the school or district work with education partners to set up a process for providing advice that reflects the following elements:<sup>14</sup>

- mutual understanding and respect of each partner’s roles and responsibilities
- effective communication
- clear, easily understood language and processes that everyone can use
- equal opportunity to speak and be heard
- equal access to relevant information, resources and expertise
- joint planning, goal-setting and evaluation
- a shared desire to work in the interests of students and public education.
- training, resources and mentorship for parent leaders
- information from the school and district staff on how parental advice and resources are used.

## Consultation

Consultation is an exchange of ideas and opinions among the partners, usually on an equal basis. Where ideas or opinions of the partners are not included, the decision-maker explains the reasons.

For example, parents can consult with a teacher or principal on their child’s educational program. Educators use their professional judgement and consider the information parents provide to help develop the program in the best interest of the child. Parents feel consulted when their information and ideas are included in their child’s program, and they continue to be involved as the program changes to respond to the needs of the child.

In a consultation at the district level, partners may take an active role in shaping policy. At the end of the consultation, the school board is responsible for making the final decision and for carrying out the policy.

Because they represent all the people who live in the district, school boards also consult with the whole community. One of the ways they consult is through community forums. A community forum engages parents, community members, agencies and others for a specific purpose. It reaches out to plan with families and the community. A forum is useful when consulting in the development of programs and partnerships for children that are meaningful to families and community. School boards also hold

forums to address issues of common concern to the school, district and community. Forums offer the chance for school boards to hear and consider the community's collective wisdom in its decision-making.

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### Consulting on the Local School Calendar

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Peace River North School District (SD 60) is located on the eastern side of the Rocky Mountains on the northern tip of the Canadian Prairies. The main centre, Fort St. John has six elementary schools, two junior secondary schools and one large senior secondary school. There are also three elementary schools in the surrounding communities of Taylor, Charlie Lake and Baldonnel.

To deal with budget challenges, Peace River North School Board has altered the standard school calendar a number of times. One year, the board proposed a school calendar that would reduce the number of days schools were in session and extend the school day. The board proposed extending spring break by a week and distributing the remaining days throughout the rest of the year, said board chair Gary Gamble.

When a school board considers a change to the standard school calendar, it must consult with parents affected by the change.

During the board's consultation meetings with the parents in the schools, trustees learned that the parents in the surrounding communities wanted a different school calendar than the one the board proposed. They wanted to observe different holidays, Gamble said. The board knew that when the district followed the standard calendar, children in those schools were absent on those particular days. As a result, the board adopted two different school calendars: one for schools in those communities and the original proposal for the schools in Fort St. John.

When the board consults with parents, "we listen," he said. Parents can provide more information that helps the board make decisions that support children and families.

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■ **CommunityLINK** (Learning Includes Nutrition and Knowledge) provides funding to all 60 school boards to support vulnerable students in academic achievement and social functioning. The funding helps districts provide services such as breakfast and lunch programs, inner city school programs, after-school care, school-based support workers, community school programs and counselling for at-risk children and youth.

For more information, visit [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/communitylink](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/communitylink)

*“Positive impact through engagement stems from partnerships between schools, parents and communities that are based on mutual benefit, respect and accountability.”*

Improving Educational Impact Through Community and Family Engagement  
Intercultural Development Research Association Newsletter.  
November-December 2002

## Community Involvement

More and more, schools are serving students’ social as well as their educational needs. Community members and agencies offer valuable skills and information that support schools in these efforts. Schools recognize that to help students succeed in learning and life, schools and the communities they serve need to be strongly connected.

### Working Together to Support Early Literacy

Qualicum School District (SD69) is supporting children’s readiness to learn when they start kindergarten by reaching out to families with pre-school children. It all began in 1999 when the district determined that to get all students in Grade 3 reading at grade level, the students were going to need help with literacy in their preschool years.

The school board committed to putting the time and money in to make it work, said school board chair Rhonda Roy. The board funded a Community Literacy Liaison position to coordinate preschool literacy initiatives. The liaison pulled together key people in the Oceanside community to talk about a vision for pre-school literacy. Knowing that literacy initiatives are less likely to succeed when families are in need, the group became the Building Learning Together Steering Committee, a working partnership of community agencies, non-profit groups, parents, First Nations and government representatives that share resources, ideas and expertise.

Today more than 18 early literacy projects are under way in the community. The district coordinates the projects, although it does not offer all of them. The Words on Wheels (WOW) bus is just one example of the community partnership at work. The school district donated a school bus that was renovated with the help of the Qualicum Beach Rotary Club, the Newcomers Clubs, Woodworkers Guild, community volunteers, students from Ballenas Secondary and many community businesses and agencies. The bus is a travelling resource centre, visiting neighbourhoods throughout the district. It provides a welcoming place for children and families to explore the wonders of literacy through books, activities and story-time. “Community visitors” hop aboard to help connect families with other resources in the community, from health to childcare to adult literacy programs.

These outreach efforts are paying off for families, Roy said. Schools are seen as more welcoming to families when preschoolers are enjoying songs, stories and rhymes with Mother Goose in the local elementary school libraries. Many of the personal barriers families face in learning about and accessing much-needed services are being addressed.

The success of this program can be attributed to the commitment of

the steering committee and the agencies involved, as well as the tremendous support from the community itself. Individual businesses donate time, money and goods, crafts and trades people donate their skills, and seniors and others bake goods and volunteer to be Grandbuddies. This level of commitment by the community shows their belief in supporting families in their community, Roy said.

Partners work in a respectful relationship that focuses on working together to meet the needs of children and families. Information is gathered and shared to help evaluate their progress toward delivering a comprehensive system of supports and services for young children and their families.

For more information about Building Learning Together, visit the district website [www.sd69.bc.ca](http://www.sd69.bc.ca)



### Early Learning and Literacy

In BC, the Ministry of Education has also recognized the importance of children's early development and family involvement to children's success at school. It has published *Ready, Set, Learn*, a booklet with tips to help parent support pre-schoolers. The booklet, published in 13 languages is available in districts or on the ministry website [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/literacy/rs1](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/literacy/rs1)

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9 Institute for Global Ethics. [www.globalethics.org/about/history.htm](http://www.globalethics.org/about/history.htm)

10 Adapted from *Notes about Teamwork*\* adapted from Bruce Wellman and Laura Lipton. [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/spc/notesteamwork.pdf](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/spc/notesteamwork.pdf)

11 Adapted from *PAC/DPAC Relations: Turning Conflict into Collaboration*, BCCPAC Advocacy Project. BCCPAC Leadership Conference, Fall 2005.

12 Adapted from *Notes About Building Consensus* designed for School Planning Councils. [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/spc/spctrainres.htm](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/spc/spctrainres.htm)

13 Black, Henry Campbell, *Black's Law Dictionary*, Sixth Edition West Publishing Company p.54

14 Adapted from *Effective Consultation Leads to Better Partnerships*. ImPACT. Quarterly newsletter published by BCCPAC

## 4

## governance

*“The Public: The public of British Columbia has the right to expect that schools operate effectively and efficiently and are accountable for evaluating and reporting their progress on a regular basis. The public has the corresponding responsibility to provide schools with the necessary resources and moral support to fulfill their mission.”*

BC Ministry of Education,  
Statement of Education Policy Order

### The School Act

The *School Act* sets out the rights and responsibilities of students, parents, teachers, principals, school district officials, school boards and the Minister of Education. The Act also gives authority to school boards to govern according to public school legislation and regulations.

The *School Act* allows the minister to issue “orders” to carry out any of the minister’s powers, duties or functions under the act. These are Ministerial Orders. Examples of orders of interest to parents include:

- Special Needs Students Order
- Individual Education Plan Order.

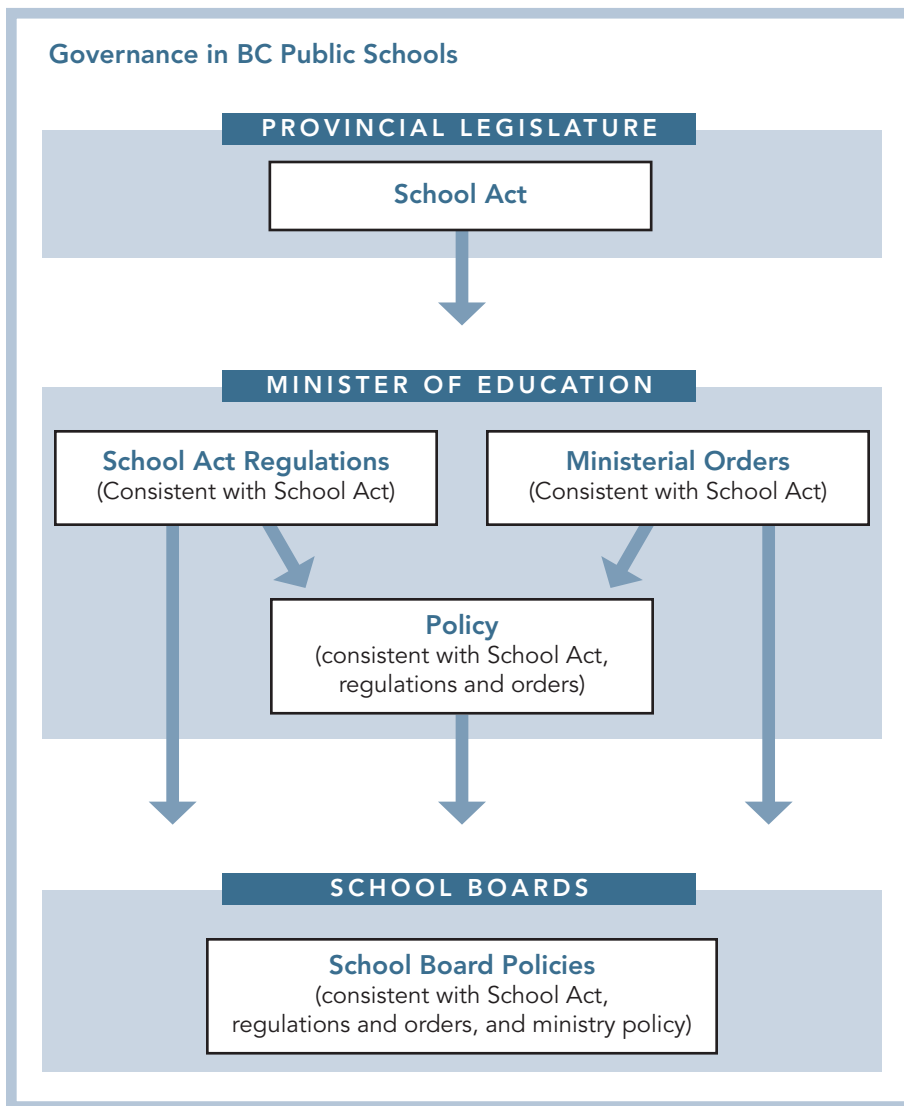
The Act also requires the minister to advise the Provincial Cabinet of any additions or changes to regulations made by orders in council. An example of a regulation is the BC School Regulation issued under Sections 5 and 175 of the *School Act*. The power and duties of principals, vice-principals or directors of instruction and the duties of teachers, superintendents of schools and secretary treasurers are in this regulation.

### The Teaching Profession Act

The *Teaching Profession Act* establishes the structure and responsibilities of the BC College of Teachers. (See page 72)

### Ministry Policy and Procedures

Policy is one of the ways the ministry achieves the government’s goals and objectives. The ministry develops policies to outline clear rules and expectations that guide the delivery of its programs and services. Ministry policies can flow from legislation or from funding decisions. Policy must comply with existing school law such as the *School Act* and the *Teaching Profession Act*. The procedures give education partners guidelines on how to carry out ministry policy.



*“In the Ministry of Education, there are different kinds of policy:*

*The “musts” which require compliance (e.g., the School Act requires children aged 5-16 to attend school)*

*The “shoulds” which encourage or provide incentives (e.g., school planning councils should consult the wider education community)*

*The “mays” which are enabling (e.g., providing school boards with more flexibility when establishing local school calendars).”*

Ministry of Education  
[www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy)

The ministry decides education policies that:

- set educational standards based on what students need to achieve
- monitor student performance and report the results to the public
- work with schools and communities to improve student and school performance
- distribute funds for the education system, and
- oversee the governance of the system as a whole.

Examples of ministry policy include:

- Diversity in BC Schools: A Framework
- accountability contracts between the ministry and school boards
- School Planning Councils
- Special Education.



■ Find more about the legislation and policy at [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/legislation/schoollaw](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/legislation/schoollaw) ; ministry policy at [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy)

*“Accountability Contracts are the school boards’ public commitment to improving student achievement.”*

Key Work Resources. BCSTA.  
November 2005

## The Accountability Framework

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The Ministry of Education’s Accountability Framework focuses school and school board attention and resources on improving student achievement.

Each year the school board sets goals and targets for student achievement in an accountability contract. The district uses information from a variety of student assessments to help set goals and targets. Each school district’s contract is different, because it responds to student needs in that district. The ministry monitors the contracts and gives feedback to districts through deputy minister’s visits, ministry contact and District Reviews.

The parts of the Accountability Framework are:

- school plans developed by the School Planning Council
- Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements (EA)
- District Reviews.

### The District Review and Parent Involvement

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One way that the ministry sees how a school district is meeting the goals of its accountability contract is with a District Review. A District Review Team visits each school district in the province every three years. A school superintendent chairs the team and other members include parents, educators and ministry staff. The team looks at 10 key areas related to school and district improvement.

One of the areas explored is whether a school district meets expectations about parental involvement. The team asks:

1. At the school and district levels,
  - a) how are parents encouraged to support their child’s achievement?
  - b) how are parents and parent groups, including the PACs and DPACs, involved in efforts to improve student achievement?
2. How are School Planning Councils reaching out to engage all parents, including parents of specific groups such as Aboriginal, Special Needs and ESL students, to support achievement for all students?
3. What strategies is the district finding most useful in engaging parents?

District Reviews are posted on the ministry website [www.bced.bc.ca](http://www.bced.bc.ca)

## The School Board

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There are 60 school boards in B.C, including Conseil Scolaire Francophone de la Colombie-Britannique, which governs the system providing services to Francophone students in BC. School boards are responsible for designing and providing educational programs that reflect the wishes of the local community. They are also responsible for the management and operation of schools in the district.



**The Conseil Scolaire Francophone de la Colombie-Britannique is BC's only francophone education authority. Established in 1995, the authority meets BC's obligation under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms to enable francophones to manage their own education programs. Students enrolled in CSF schools receive the same standard curriculum as other BC students; however, they receive their instruction in French and have an added linguistic and cultural component.**



## 5

## legislation

This section provides an overview of rights and responsibilities outlined in the *School Act* and its accompanying regulations and orders.

It is not a complete list, nor is it meant to interpret or take the place of legislation. If parents or others require more information, they are encouraged to call their local school district office, visit the Ministry of Education website ([www.bced.gov.bc.ca/legislation](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/legislation)) or seek legal advice. Other legislation also influences the rights and responsibilities of everyone involved in the public education system. (See list of other legislation in Appendix H, page 69).

There are rights and responsibilities that are common to everyone involved in public education. People must treat others with dignity and respect. They are entitled to:

- be treated with dignity and respect
- be free from discrimination
- be informed of their entitlements and how to access them
- information about decisions which affect them
- seek support and advocacy from people they choose or from their respective organizations.

### Legislated Authority of School Boards

Source of reference: *School Act*

#### The School Board has the responsibility to:

- to establish a school planning council for each school (*SA Section 8.1*)
- to consult with each SPC on allocation of staff and resources, matters in the board's accountability contract and educational services and educational programs in the school (*SA Section 8.1*)
- for the management of schools and for custody, maintenance and safekeeping of all property owned or leased by the board (*SA Section 74*)

- to ensure that a principal, vice-principal or director of instruction is responsible for each school (SA Section 74)
- to provide an educational program for all persons of school age who live in the district and enroll in a school (SA Section 74.1)
- to ensure class sizes do not exceed required averages (SA Section 76.1)
- report to minister ensuring class size and composition requirements are met (SA Section 76.3)
- to make available to parents a standard school calendar for each school (SA Section 77)
- to consult with affected parents and employee representatives if adopting a school calendar different from the standard (SA Section 78)
- to establish and maintain a record for each student and each child registered with the board's schools (SA Section 79)
- to share student records when students are enrolled with more than one board (SA Section 79.1)
- to prepare an accountability contract with respect to student achievement (SA Section 79.2)
- to provide free of charge to every student of school age instruction in an educational program sufficient to meet general requirements for graduation and instruction in an educational program after student has met the general requirements (SA Section 82)
- to make an educational program available to suspended students (SA Section 85)
- to ensure discipline is similar to that of a kind, firm and judicious parent and not include corporal punishment (SA Section 76)
- report to the College of Teachers the dismissal, suspension, discipline or resignation of a member of the college or a person holding a letter of permission to teach. (SA Section 16)

#### A Board may:

- open, close or reopen a school permanently or for a specified period of time, subject to the orders of the minister (SA Section 73)
- temporarily close a school building if the health or safety of the students is endangered. (SA Section 73)
- operate more than one school in a single building or location (SA Section 73)
- refuse to enrol a non-district child under Section 2 if the child is suspended by another board, or a student to whom another board has refused to offer an educational program (SA Section 74)

*“School Boards: have a duty to govern districts and their schools in accordance with specified powers in a fiscally responsible and cost effective manner. They have a responsibility to ensure that schools provide students with opportunities for a quality education; to set education policies that reflect the aspirations of the community and that are consistent with overall provincial guidelines; to provide leadership and encouragement to schools and the community; to cooperate with the community and social service agencies in the delivery of non-educational support services to students; and to focus on the following areas of district concern: (1) implementation of provincial and local education programs; (2) school finance and facilities; (3) student access and achievement; (4) teaching performance; and (5) accountability to parents, taxpayers, the community and to the Province.”*

BC Ministry of Education, Statement of Education Policy Order 1989

- develop a local school calendar (*SA Section 78*)
- require a deposit for educational resource materials for students which must be refunded all or in part on return of the materials (*SA Section 82*)
- determine local policy for efficient and effective operation of schools (*SA Section 85*)
- approve educational resource materials and other supplies and services for use by students (*SA Section 85*)
- permit persons other than students to use board facilities, equipment and personnel (*SA Section 85*)
- evaluate and recognize educational activities of an educational program undertaken by a student outside of the school (*SA Section 85*)
- develop and offer local programs for use in schools (*SA Section 85*)
- refuse to offer an educational program to a student 16 years of age or older where the student has refused to comply with the code of conduct, rules and policies of the board or failed to apply themselves in their studies. (*SA Section 85*)
- make rules respecting:
  - student conduct, suspension and attendance
  - establishment, operation, administration and management of schools, educational programs and transportation equipment
  - provision of educational program for suspended students
  - management of student housing and supervision of students in them
  - any other matter under the jurisdiction of the board (*SA Section 85*)
  - provision of volunteer services, as long as it does not displace an employee (*SA Sections 85*)
- provide a system of traffic patrols (*SA Section 85*)
- may enter into agreements with other boards to provide educational programs and health and support services to students. (*SA Section 86*)

## Legislated Authority of Superintendent of Schools

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Source of reference: *School Act*

A school board appoints a superintendent of schools for the school district. The superintendent is accountable to the school board and on some matters, to the Minister of Education. A board may also appoint one or more assistant superintendents of schools to perform duties assigned by the superintendent of schools for that school district.

Under the board's direction, the superintendent:

- has general supervision and direction over the educational staff employed in the district
- is responsible for the general organization, administration, supervision and evaluation of all educational programs the operation of schools in that district, and
- must perform other duties set out in the regulations.

*“District Officials: have a duty to exercise professional judgment in managing the district in accordance with specified powers and duties. They have a corresponding responsibility to provide professional leadership in the design and implementation of education programs in districts, and are accountable to the local school board.”*

BC Ministry of Education, Statement of Education Policy Order 1989

## Legislated Authority of Secretary-Treasurers

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Sources of reference: *School Regulation*

The secretary-treasurer is the board's corporate financial officer and is responsible for:

- complying with the accounting and administrative procedures specified by the minister
- keeping a record of the proceedings of the board
- performing those duties assigned by the board
- performing the duties specified by the *School Act* and rules and regulations made under it.

## Students

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Sources of reference: *School Act, School Act Regulations and Ministerial Orders*

**Students have the right to:**

- enroll in an educational program between the ages of 5 and 19 (*SA Section 2*)
- enroll in an educational program in any school in BC subject to the board determining there is available space and facilities, or in the case of a distributed learning school, capacity to deliver an educational program (*SA Section 2*)

*“Students: have the opportunity to avail themselves of a quality education consistent with their abilities, the opportunity to share in the shaping of their educational programs, and the opportunity to determine their career and occupational goals. They have the responsibility to make the most of their opportunities, to respect the rights of others, and to cooperate with fellow students in the achievement of their goals.”*

BC Ministry of Education, Statement of Education Policy Order 1989

- enroll in one or more educational programs under section 3 if the student is in any of grades 10-12 and receives instruction through distributed learning (*SA Section 3.1*)
- consult with a teacher or principal with regard to their educational program (*SA Section 4*)
- receive instruction in English (or in a language other than English if the students’ parents are eligible under section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms) (*SA Section 5*)
- examine, on request and while accompanied by the principal or designate, their student records (*SA Section 9*)
- receive a copy of their student records, although they may be requested to pay a fee (*SA Section 9*)
- appeal to the school board decisions (or a staff member’s failure to make a decision) by any school employee which affect the student’s education health or safety (*SA Section 11*)
- if the student has a special need, to receive an educational program in a classroom and to be integrated with other students who do not have special needs, unless the educational needs of the student or other students indicate the educational program for the student with special needs should be provided otherwise. (*Special Needs Student Order*)
- if the student has a special need, where appropriate, the opportunity to be consulted about the preparation of their Individual Education Plan (IEP) (*Individual Education Plan Order*)
- be offered student learning activities in accordance with the IEP designed for that student. (*Individual Education Plan Order*)

#### **Students have the responsibility to:**

- participate in an educational program until at least 16-years-old (*SA Section 3*)
- comply with the school rules authorized by the principal of the school and the code of conduct and other rules and policies of the board (*SA Section 6*)
- participate in an educational program as directed by the board (*SA Section 6*)
- be held liable with their parents for board property that is destroyed, damaged, lost or converted by an intentional or negligent act. (*SA Section 10*)

## Children's Human Rights (Plain Language Version)

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The Declaration, adopted Nov. 20, 1959 by the United Nations and ratified by Canada in 1991, includes the following principles for all children:

All children have the right to what follows, no matter what their race, colour, sex, language religion, political or other opinion, or where they were born or to whom they were born.

1. You have the special right to grow up in a healthy and normal way, free and with dignity.
  2. You have a right to a name and to be a member of a country.
  3. You have a right to good food, housing and medical care.
  4. You have the right to special care if handicapped in any way.
  5. You have the right to love and understanding, preferably from parents, but from government where you have no parent.
  6. You have the right to go to school for free, to play, and to have an equal chance to be what you are and to learn to be responsible and useful.
  7. You have the right always to be among the first to get help.
  8. You have the right not to be harmed and not to be hired for work until old enough.
-

## Parents

Sources of reference: *School Act, School Act Regulations and Ministerial Orders*

*“Parents: have the right and responsibility to participate in the process of determining the education goals, policies and services provided for their children. They have a primary responsibility to ensure that children are provided with the healthy and supportive environment necessary for learning. They have a responsibility to shape and support the goals of the school system and to share in the tasks of educating their young.”*

BC Ministry of Education, Statement of Education Policy Order 1989

### Parents have the right to:

- enroll their child in a school of their choice in BC where the board decides there is a facility and space (*SA Section 2*)
- receive an educational program for their child provided in English, or in French if the child is eligible (*SA Section 3*)
- enroll their child in an educational program on the first day of a school year if, on or before December 31 of that school year, the child will be five-years-old, or defer the enrollment of their five-year-old child until the first school day of the next school year (*SA Section 3*)
- be informed about their children’s attendance, behaviour and progress in school (*SA Section 7*)
- belong to a Parent Advisory Council (*SA Section 7*)
- provide volunteer services at or for a school as long as the service does not displace an employee. (*SA Section 7.1*)
- receive on request, a copy of the school plan for the school and the accountability contract for the school district (*SA Section 7*)
- run for election as a parent representative to the District Parent Advisory Council (*SA Section 8*)
- run for election as a parent representative to a School Planning Council (SPC) position if not employed by any school district (*SA Section 8*)
- appeal a decision, or failure to make a decision, of an employee to the board, where that decision significantly affects the education health or safety of their child. A board may refuse to hear the appeal unless the parent discusses the decision with one or more persons as directed by the board. (*SA Section 11*)
- educate their child at home or elsewhere (*Section 12*)
- be consulted through a school board process when the board is considering a school calendar that is different from the standard school calendar for the school their child attends. (*SA Section 78*)
- examine, on request and while accompanied by the principal or designate, all student records kept by a board regarding their child (*SA Section 9*)
- receive a copy of any student record they are entitled to examine, on payment of a fee if applicable (*SA Section 9*)
- receive the most recent Student Learning Plan of their child in grades 9-12 as required under the curriculum, if any (*Student Progress Report Order*)

- consult with a teacher or principal regarding their child's educational program (*SA Section 7*)
- be consulted regarding placement of their child with special needs in an educational program, and have their child integrated with other students who do not have special needs unless the educational needs of their child or other students indicate otherwise (*Special Needs Student Order*)
- be consulted about the preparation their child's Individual Education Plan. (*Individual Education Plan Order*)

### Parents have the responsibility to:

- register their child in an educational program (*SA Section 3*)
- consult with a teacher or principal about their child's educational program if requested (*SA Section 7*)
- be held liable, with their child, for property of the board that is destroyed, damaged, lost or converted by an intentional or negligent act of their child. (*SA Section 10*)

## Teachers

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Sources of reference: *School Act, School Act Regulations and Ministerial Orders*

### Teachers have the right to:

- exercise professional judgement in providing instruction to students
- be consulted on class size and class composition (*SA Section 76.2*)
- provide consent whether a class in Grades 4 to 7 exceeds 30 students. (*SA Section 76.2*)

### Teachers have the responsibility to:

- design, supervise and assess educational programs and provide instruction to individual students and groups of students (*SA Section 17*)
- hold a certificate of qualification as a teacher or a letter of permission issued under the Teaching Profession Act (*SA Section 19*)
- provide teaching and other educational services, including advice and instructional assistance to the students assigned to them (*School Regulation*)
- provide such assistance as the board or principal considers necessary for the supervision of students on school premises and at school functions, whenever and wherever held (*School Regulation*)



*“Teachers: have the right to exercise professional judgment in providing instruction to students in accordance with specified duties and powers. They have a corresponding responsibility to ensure that each student is provided with quality instruction, to participate in all normal school activities and to monitor the behavior and progress of each learner in accordance with provincial and local policies. They have a responsibility to communicate with students and parents, and are accountable to the School Board and its delegates.”*

BC Ministry of Education, Statement of Education Policy Order, 1989

- ensure that students understand and comply with the codes of conduct governing their behaviour and with the rules and policies governing the operation of the school (*School Regulation*)
- assist in providing programs to promote students’ intellectual development, human and social development and career development (*School Regulation*)
- maintain records required by the minister, the board and the school principal (*School Regulation*)
- encourage regular attendance of students assigned to them (*School Regulation*)
- evaluate education programs for students as required by the minister or the board (*School Regulation*)
- evaluate each students’ intellectual development, human and social development and career development and educational programs, administering and grading required graduation program exams (*School Regulation*)
- ensure the security of Provincial exams and keep completed Provincial exams for any period of time set by the minister (*School Regulation*)
- provide information about students assigned to them, as required by the minister, board or, subject to the approval of the board, a parent (*School Regulation*)
- verify the accuracy of the information provided to the minister when required by the minister (*School Regulation*)
- regularly provide parents or guardians of students with reports about the student’s school progress (*School Regulation*)
- attend all meetings or conferences called by the principal or superintendent of schools to discuss matters they consider necessary unless excused by them from attending (*School Regulation*)
- admit student teachers to their classroom, provide assistance to them and submit reports on their teaching ability or other matters relating to their work (*School Regulation*)
- discipline students in a manner similar to that of a kind, firm and judicious parent. (*SA Section 76*)

## Principals and Vice-Principals

Sources of reference: *School Act, School Act Regulations and Ministerial Orders*

### Principals and Vice-Principals have the right to:

- exercise professional judgement in managing the school.

### Principals and Vice-Principals have the responsibility to:

- perform the supervisory, management and other duties required or assigned by the board (*School Regulation*)
- confer with the board on matters of educational policy and where appropriate attend board meetings for that purpose (*School Regulation*)
- evaluate teachers and report to the board (*School Regulation*)
- assist in making the *School Act* and *School Regulation* effective and in carrying out a system of education in conformity with the orders of the minister (*School Regulation*)
- advise and assist the superintendent of schools in exercising his or her powers under the *School Act* (*School Regulation*)
- recommend to the superintendent the assignment or reassignment of teachers (*School Regulation*)
- recommend to the superintendent of schools the dismissal or discipline of a teacher (*School Regulation*)
- perform teaching duties assigned by the board (*School Regulation*)
- represent the board when meeting with the public in the capacity of principal or vice-principal of a school (*School Regulation*)
- discipline students in a manner similar to that of a kind, firm and judicious parent (*SA Section 76*)
- act in accordance with board policy if suspending students (*SA Section 26*)

### Principals have the responsibility to:

- administer and supervise the school including: (*School Regulation*)
  - implementing educational programs
  - student placement and programming
  - teachers’ timetables
  - the program of teaching and learning activities
  - the program of student evaluation and assessment and reporting to parents
  - maintenance of school records
  - general conduct of students both on school premises and during activities that are off school premises and organized or sponsored by the board

*“School Principals: have the right to exercise professional judgment in managing the school in accordance with specified duties and powers. They have a corresponding responsibility to ensure that each student is provided with opportunities for a quality education. Principals are to provide administrative leadership, in consultation with teachers and the community that reflects the aspirations of parents and the school community and that is consistent with provincial and district guidelines. They cooperate with parents and the community in the delivery of non-educational support services to students, and focus on the following areas of school concern: (1) student access and achievement; (2) quality teaching; (3) communication with parents and the community; and (4) accountability to parents and to the Board.”*

Ministry of Education, Statement of Education Policy Order, 1989

- in accordance with board policies, exercise paramount authority within the school in matters concerning the discipline of students (*School Regulation*)
- appoint one student from grade 10, 11 or 12, after consulting with students in those grades to that school's school planning council (*SA Section 8.1*)
- consult with the teacher if organizing a class in grades 8-12 exceeding 30 students (*SA Section 76.2*)
- consult with the teacher if organizing a class which includes more than three students with Individual Education Plans, not including those with exceptional gifts or talents (*SA Section 76.2*)
- obtain consent of the teacher if organizing a class in grades 4 to 7 exceeding 30 students (*SA Section 76.2*)
- consult with the School Planning Council about the proposed organization of class for that year (*SA Section 76.2*)

Principals ensure that parents or guardians are regularly provided with reports about the student's school progress in intellectual development, human and social development and career development and the student's attendance and punctuality.

These reports are made at least five times during the school year as follows:

1. Three written reports, one of which shall be at the end of the school year
  - a) on a form ordered by the minister, or
  - b) on a form approved by the board containing information, and when required, using reporting symbols ordered or approved by the minister and
2. at least two informal reports.

## The Parent Advisory Council (PAC)

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Section 8 of the *School Act* says:

- (1) Parents of students of school age attending a school or a Provincial school may apply to the board or to the minister, as the case may be, to establish a parents' advisory council for that school.
- (2) On receipt of an application under subsection (1), the board or minister must establish a parents' advisory council for the school or the Provincial school.
- (3) There must be only one parents' advisory council for each school or Provincial school.

- (4) A parents' advisory council, through its elected officers, may
  - (a) advise the board and the principal and staff of the school or the Provincial school respecting any matter relating to the school or the Provincial school, other than matters assigned to the school planning council, and
  - (b) at the request of the school planning council, assist the school planning council in carrying out its functions under this Act.
- (5) A parents' advisory council, in consultation with the principal, must make bylaws governing its meetings and the business and conduct of its affairs, including bylaws governing
  - (a) the dissolution of the parents' advisory council,
  - (b) the election of members to represent the parents' advisory council on the school planning council, and
  - (c) the election of a member to represent the parents' advisory council on the district parents' advisory council.
- (6) Voting at an election referred to in subsection (5) (b) and (c) must be by secret ballot.

## The District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC)

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Section 8.4 of the *School Act* says:

- (1) A parents' advisory council, through its elected officers, may apply to the board for the establishment of a district parents' advisory council.
- (2) On receipt of an application under subsection (1), the board must establish a district parents' advisory council for the school district consisting of representatives elected to the council under subsection (3).
- (3) Each parents' advisory council in a school district may elect annually one of its members to be its representative on the district parents' advisory council for a term of not more than one year.
- (4) There must be only one district parents' advisory council for each school district.

Section 8.5 of the *School Act* says:

- (1) Subject to section 67 (5.1), the district parents' advisory council may advise the board on any matter relating to education in the school district.
- (2) A district parents' advisory council must make bylaws governing its meetings and the business and conduct of its affairs, including bylaws governing the dissolution of the council.
- (3) A superintendent of schools for the school district, a designate of the superintendent or a trustee of the school district may attend any meeting of the district parents' advisory council.

## The School Planning Council (SPC)

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Section 8.1 of the *School Act* says:

- (1) A board must establish a school planning council for each school, except a Provincial resource program, in its school district.
- (2) At the request of 3 parents of students attending a Provincial resource program, a board may establish a school planning council for the Provincial resource program.
- (3) A school planning council for a school consists of the following persons:
  - (a) the principal of the school;
  - (b) one of the teachers at the school, elected annually by secret ballot by the teachers who teach at the school;
  - (c) 3 representatives of the parents' advisory council who are
    - (i) parents of students enrolled in the school, and
    - (ii) elected annually by the parents' advisory council;
  - (d) if the school enrolls students in grade 10, 11 or 12, one student of school age enrolled in one of those grades at the school, appointed annually by the principal of the school after consulting with the students enrolled in those grades at the school.
- (4) One of the representatives elected under subsection (3) (c) must be an elected officer of the parents' advisory council.
- (5) A board may appoint a person to fill a vacancy on a school planning council if
  - (a) there is no parents' advisory council for the school,
  - (b) the parents' advisory council for the school does not elect 3 representatives under subsection (3) (c),
  - (c) the teachers at the school do not elect a representative under subsection (3) (b), or
  - (d) the principal of the school does not appoint a student under subsection (3) (d).
- (6) The term of office of a person appointed or elected under this section to the school planning council must not be more than one year.
- (7) An employee of any board is not eligible for election under subsection (3) (c) or an appointment in the circumstances referred to in subsection (5) (a) or (b).

## Role of a school planning council

Section 8.2 of the *School Act* says:

A board must consult with a school planning council in respect of the following:

- (a) the allocation of staff and resources in the school;
- (b) matters contained in the board's accountability contract relating to the school;
- (c) educational services and educational programs in the school.

## School plan

Section 8.3 of the *School Act* says:

- (1) In each school year, a board must approve a school plan for every school in the school district.
- (2) By a date set by the board, a school planning council must prepare and submit to the board a school plan for the school in respect of improving student achievement and other matters contained in the board's accountability contract relating to that school.
- (3) A school planning council must consult with the parents' advisory council during the preparation of the school plan.
- (4) The board may approve, approve with modifications or reject a school plan submitted under subsection (2) or (6).
- (5) Before approving a school plan, the board may
  - (a) consult with the school planning council about modifications to the school plan, or
  - (b) direct the school planning council to modify all or part of the school plan by a specified date.
- (6) The board may direct the principal of a school to prepare and submit to the board a school plan for the school by a specified date if
  - (a) the school planning council does not submit a school plan under subsection (2),
  - (b) the school planning council does not comply with a direction of the board under subsection (5) (b), or
  - (c) the board rejects the school plan submitted under subsection (2).
- (7) A board must make a school plan approved under subsection (4) available to the parents of students attending that school.

## BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC)

[www.bccpac.bc.ca](http://www.bccpac.bc.ca)

Our vision is to improve public education for all students by including and supporting parents.

### **BCCPAC Directors' Code of Ethics**

I accept a position on the BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils Board of Directors and promise to:

1. Maintain a high standard of conduct.
2. Work cooperatively to fulfill the goals of the Board.
3. Commit to being a part of the team and be frank with other Board members.
4. Volunteer for or be appointed to committees based on my ability to best serve the needs of the Confederation.
5. Be willing to review my work with other Board members and the general members.
6. Support Board decisions in spite of personal concerns or reservations.
7. Express concerns about proposed actions while they are under consideration, so that these may be taken into account before a decision is made.
8. Share privileged or private information relevant to Board business at the Board table.
9. Speak and act towards other members with respect and dignity, mindful of other members' rights and sensibilities.
10. Direct any criticism of the action of other Board members to that member first, and then if necessary, after informing that Board member, may direct the criticism in confidence to the President and/or Vice-presidents.
11. Treat with discretion any discussions with a parent with a concern, respecting the confidentiality of the people involved.
12. Seek to represent the parent perspective to all the groups in education, focusing on the best interests of the students.
13. Keep membership lists confidential.
14. Direct any requests for a statement on behalf of the Confederation to the President.
15. Give up all duties, rights and responsibilities of a Board member upon resignation.

## British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF)

[www.bctf.bc.ca](http://www.bctf.bc.ca)

The BCTF is the union of professionals representing 38,000 public school teachers in the province of British Columbia.

### BCTF Code of Ethics

The Code of Ethics states general rules for all members of the BCTF for maintaining high standards of professional service and conduct toward students, colleagues, and the professional union. When there is an alleged breach of this code, the Judicial Council considers and deals with complaints against members.

1. The teacher speaks and acts toward students with respect and dignity and deals judiciously with them, always mindful of their individual rights and sensibilities.
2. The teacher respects the confidential nature of information concerning students and may give it only to authorized persons or agencies directly concerned with their welfare.
3. The teacher recognizes that a privileged relationship with students exists and refrains from exploiting that relationship for material, ideological, or other advantage.
4. The teacher is willing to review with colleagues, students, and their parents/guardians the quality of service rendered by the teacher and the practices employed in discharging professional duties.
5. The teacher directs any criticism of the teaching performance and related work of a colleague to that colleague in private, and only then, after informing the colleague in writing of the intent to do so, may direct in confidence the criticism to appropriate individuals who are able to offer advice and assistance. (See note following #10 and statement 31.B.12.)
6. The teacher acknowledges the authority and responsibilities of the BCTF and its locals and fulfills obligations arising from membership in his/her professional union.
7. The teacher adheres to the provisions of the collective agreement.
8. The teacher acts in a manner not prejudicial to job actions or other collective strategies of his/her professional union.
9. The teacher neither applies for nor accepts a position which is included in a Federation in-dispute declaration.
10. The teacher, as an individual or as a member of a group of teachers, does not make unauthorized representations to outside bodies in the name of the Federation or its locals.



■ The Member's Guide to the BCTF includes information for members and their locals. A copy of the guide is available on the BCTF website at [www.bctf.ca/About/MembersGuide/](http://www.bctf.ca/About/MembersGuide/)

*NOTE: It shall not be considered a breach of Clause 5 of the Code of Ethics for a member to follow legal requirements or official protocols in reporting child protection issues.*



## British Columbia Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association (BCPVPA)

[www.bcpvpa.bc.ca](http://www.bcpvpa.bc.ca)

The mission of the BC Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association is to support members in providing quality leadership in public education.

### Code of Ethics

As educational leaders and advocates for students in the province of British Columbia, members of the BCPVPA:

- Make the well-being of students the fundamental value in all decision making and actions;
- Respect the rights of all individuals;
- Meet professional responsibilities with honesty, integrity, and respect for others;
- Support the principle of due process;
- Respect all confidential information;
- Abide by the *School Act* of British Columbia, School Regulations, and Minister of Education Orders;
- Strive to maintain the standards stated in the Code of Professional Practice of the BCPVPA;
- Strive for excellence in school leadership; and
- Promote quality leadership in education.

## British Columbia School Superintendents Association (BCSSA)

[www.bcssa.org](http://www.bcssa.org)

The members of the BCSSA are the superintendents, assistant superintendents, directors of instruction and other senior executives of British Columbia's 60 school districts.

### **Mission**

The mission of the BCSSA is to enable its members to be proactive, visionary leaders of public education by supporting their individual professional and personal development and by representing their collective wisdom and interests.

### **Code of Ethics**

Members of the BCSSA shall:

- Aspire to provide the best possible educational experiences and opportunity for students, recognizing that the needs of the students are their primary consideration.
- Exemplify the highest standards of personal integrity in their relations with students, parents, teachers, colleagues, board members and the public.
- Show respect to colleagues and not knowingly, by work or deed, undermine a colleague or cause him/her to suffer professional disrespect.
- Develop and sustain a professional climate that promotes the effectiveness and the creative capabilities of all personnel.
- Respect the public trust represented by their position and not permit considerations of private gain nor personal interests to effect the discharge of professional obligations.
- Accept the responsibility to be learned and contribute to a growing body of specialized knowledge and skills in educational leadership.
- Conduct oneself in a manner that brings credit and honour to the profession and to the association.

## British Columbia School Trustees Association (BCSTA)

[www.bcsta.org](http://www.bcsta.org)

School boards pay an annual membership fee based on the number of students in the district to belong to the BCSTA. Membership is voluntary.

The mission of the BC School Trustees Association (BCSTA) is to support and advocate for effective public school boards in British Columbia.

The mission of BCSTA is driven by the following beliefs:

1. We believe that a high-quality public education system is the foundation of a democratic society.
2. We believe that improving student achievement is the key work of locally elected school boards.
3. We believe that the interests of BC students are best met through local decision-making with an engaged community.
4. We believe that an important role of BCSTA is to provide a strong, representative voice for school boards throughout the province.
5. We believe that an important role of BCSTA is to help build effective school boards by providing development, communications, and support services.

### Values

As the provincial organization for school trustees in British Columbia, the BC School Trustees Association believes:

- 1) that school trustees and boards are our valued clients;
- 2) that serving the needs of school districts is our prime focus;
- 3) that value for investment by members is our commitment;
- 4) that positive communication among all the educational partners, including government, is necessary;
- 5) that collaboration and cooperation are essential common goals;
- 6) that the Association must act with integrity, endorse an open style, and respect the diversity of regions and communities.

# British Columbia Ministry of Education (MoE)

[www.bced.gov.bc.ca](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca)

## Vision, Mission and Values

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### Vision

The Ministry's vision is to make BC the best educated, most literate jurisdiction on the continent.

### Mission

The mission of the Ministry of Education is to set the legal, financial, curricular and accountability frameworks so as to enable all learners to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy, democratic and pluralistic society and a prosperous, sustainable economy.

### Values

The Government of British Columbia believes that the highest standards of conduct among public service employees are essential to maintain and enhance the public's trust and confidence in the public service. The Ministry is committed to carrying out its mandate in accordance with the following key values:

**Quality:** To support the achievement of all students within a quality, performance-oriented education system.

**Service:** To provide high levels of service for students, the public, education partners, ministry colleagues, and government.

**Collaboration:** To promote collaborative and respectful approaches to communication and decision-making both internally and externally.

**Integrity:** To behave with integrity and fairness, and promote relationships of mutual trust and confidence.

**Excellence:** To strive for excellence in all aspects of our work, and acknowledge each other's contributions.

BC Ministry of Education 2006/07-2007-08 Service Plan

## British Columbia College of Teachers (BCCT)

*“Government grants to professions the right to self-regulation in the public interest. Professionals are individuals who have agreed to accept a designation and its resulting privileges in exchange for responsibilities and duties that uphold the core value of protecting the interests of those whom they serve.*

*In essence, upon admission to a profession, a professional such as an educator, lawyer, doctor or accountant promises to abide by certain rules of ethical conduct, the standards of which are far higher than those applied to the general public.”*

BC College of Teachers

*“The College of Teachers: has the duty to establish and apply standards of fitness and qualifications governing admission to the teaching profession. The specific duties of the Council of the College are to approve, for certification purposes, teacher education programs established by provincial Faculties of Education, to define bylaws and policies related to the academic and professional qualifications of teachers, to issue teaching credentials, to investigate allegations of professional misconduct and, if necessary, to exercise professional judgment in disciplining its members. The College has the responsibility for encouraging and facilitating programs of continuing teacher education, professional development and inservice designed to ensure general teacher competence, and to improve the quality of teaching in provincial schools.”*

BC Ministry of Education, Statement of Education Policy Order, 1989

The College of Teachers is the professional body that sets the standards for teacher education, professional conduct and competence for the majority of educators in BC. Established under the Teaching Profession Act, the college is required to operate and regulate the teaching profession in the public interest.

The college, governed by a 20-member council, also sets out the standards for admission to the college and issues teaching certificates. School districts are required to ensure that the educators they hire are members of the college. Teachers, vice-principals, principals, assistant superintendents and superintendents are members of the college.

The Standards for the Education, Competence and Professional Conduct of Educators in BC are the education profession’s way of describing to its members and the public:

- what they know
- what they are able to do
- how they conduct themselves as they serve the public.

Under the *Teaching Profession Act*, a member of the college has a duty to report the professional misconduct of another member to the college.



■ **The Standards for the Education, Competence and Professional Conduct of Educators are available on the college website at [www.bcct.ca](http://www.bcct.ca)**

A member of the college who has reason to believe that another member is guilty of professional misconduct toward a student that involves physical harm, sexual abuse or sexual exploitation or significant emotional harm must promptly provide a written and signed report to the college registrar.

## Complaints against members

*Adapted from Speaking Up! A parent guide to advocating for students in public school*

Members of the public can make a complaint about the action or behaviour (conduct) of a member of the BC College of Teachers. Teachers, vice-principals, principals, assistant superintendents and superintendents are members of the college. To check whether someone is a member, call the college or check their website at [www.bcct.ca](http://www.bcct.ca).

The college has its own process to review complaints from the public. Once a complaint is made, it “belongs” to the college. The college will advise you of the status of the complaint as it proceeds through their processes. While you will learn whether your complaint will be acted on, you will not be involved unless the college decides to investigate and wants more information from you.

Before you decide to complain to the college about the action or behaviour of someone in the teaching profession, you need to think about:

- How the action or behaviour of the member breaches the standards for professional conduct.
- How and whether you have worked through your district’s complaints process and noted your actions and the responses you have received, where possible. The college will ask about that.
- The suggestions, if any, that were offered to solve the problem and why they did not satisfy you.

If you decide to make a complaint to the college without first trying to use your district complaints process, be prepared to explain the reasons why you feel it is not in your, or your child’s, best interests to deal with your complaint locally.



■ For more information about the Person Complaints process, please visit the BCCT website at [www.bcct.ca](http://www.bcct.ca) or call the Intake Officer at 604-731-8170 or 1-800-555-3684.

## Other Legislation

Other legislation that influences the work of public schools include:

Constitution Act:

- Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- Rights of Aboriginal Peoples

Child, Family and Community Service Act

Employment Standards Act and Regulation

Financial Disclosure Act

Financial Information Act

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

Human Rights Code

Labour Relations Act

Local Government Act and Community Charter

Multiculturalism Act

Ombudsman Act

Office for Child and Youth Act

Official Languages Act

Personal Information Protection Act

Public Education Labour Relations Act

Public Sector Employers Act

Workers Compensation Act





# terms and definitions

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The terms used to describe what happens in public education can be confusing to many parents. Some of the terms used are explained below:

**Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement:** An agreement between a school board and local aboriginal peoples and the Ministry of Education that focuses on improving achievement for aboriginal students.

**Accountability contract:** See page 43.

**Adaptations:** Teaching methods, materials and/or evaluation methods are adapted and identified in the IEP for those students whose learning outcomes are the same as in the provincial curriculum.

**AD/HD:** Attention Deficit Disorder with or without hyperactivity.

**Assessment:** Assessment is the process of gathering evidence of what a student knows, understands and is able to do and identifying the student's learning needs. Evaluation is the process of interpreting, making judgment, and forming decisions based on that evidence.

**Child in Care:** A child who is in the custody, care or guardianship of the director under the Child, Family and Community Service Act or the director under the Adoption Act.

**Distributed Learning:** a method of instruction that relies primarily on indirect communication between students and teachers, including internet or other electronic-based delivery, teleconferencing or correspondence.

**Distributed Learning School:** a school or francophone school that offers instruction to its students by means of distributed learning only.

**DPAC:** District Parent Advisory Council. See page 13 and 56.

**ESL:** English as a Second Language. For students who require specialized services to adjust to the linguistic and cultural environment in order to be successful in the BC school system.

**FSA:** Students in Grades 4 and 7 take the Foundation Skills Assessment. The FSA is an annual province-wide assessment of BC students' academic skills. It gives a snapshot of how well BC students are learning foundation skills in Reading Comprehension, Writing, and Numeracy.

**I:** A symbol on a report card meaning In Progress/Incomplete.

**IEP:** Individual Education Plans are developed for students identified with special needs who need significant extra resources and help in a particular area. An IEP describes program adaptations and/or modifications and the

special services that are to be provided for the student. It is reviewed regularly and updated at least annually.

**IRP:** Integrated Resource Packages outline the curriculum for most core subjects and required courses. They contain suggestions about ways to teach and assess students and the resources that could be used. They also include the learning outcomes describing what students are expected to achieve by the end of the year.

**LA:** Learning Assistance provides a co-ordinated and integrated set of support services that include school-based consultation, collaborative planning and co-ordination with the school-based team, and instruction. (Special Education Services: A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines, Ministry of Education).

**LD:** Learning Disability or Severe Learning Disability (SLD).

**Modifications:** Individualized, personalized goals are developed and stated in the IEP for students whose learning outcomes are different from or in addition to the provincial curriculum.

**PAC:** See page 11.

**Paraprofessional:** a person who is trained to help a professional.

**PEN:** Each student in the province is assigned a Personal Education Number to track the student through K-12 and the transition to post-secondary education.

**School:**

- (a) a body of students that is organized as a unit for educational purposes under the supervision of a principal, vice principal or director of instruction,
- (b) the teachers and other staff members associated with the unit, and
- (c) the facilities associated with the unit, and includes a Provincial resource program and a distributed learning school.

**SPC:** School Planning Council. See page 16.

**Special Education:** a range of student support services provided by school districts to respond to the educational needs of its students, particularly those who are gifted or have a disability.

**Special Needs:** Students with special needs have disabilities of an intellectual, physical, sensory, emotional or behavioural nature, or have a learning disability or have exceptional gifts or talents.

**TA:** Teacher Assistant. In some districts, TAs may be called Special Education Assistants (SEA), Education Assistants (EA) or Certified Education Assistant (CEA).

**TOC:** Teacher On Call (substitute teacher).

# finding more information

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Information is available in schools or school districts. Parents can ask other parents, members of their PAC, DPAC or SPC, school and district staff and school trustees for information. Information is also available on school, district and ministry websites.

**A Guide to School Legislation in British Columbia:** A practical reference source on BC school law published by the BC School Trustees' Association. It describes what the legislation means for school districts and schools. Available from the BC School Trustees' Association, 4th Floor, 1580 West Broadway, Vancouver, BC V6J 5K9. Phone: (604) 734-2721; Fax: (604) 732-4559 [www.bcsta.org](http://www.bcsta.org)

**Aboriginal Enhancement Agreements:** Ministry of Education.  
[www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/agreements](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/agreements)

**Aboriginal Enhancement Agreements: A Guide for Success.** Ministry of Education [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/agreements/ea\\_guide.pdf](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/agreements/ea_guide.pdf)

## **Accountability Framework:**

- The Accountability Cycle. [www.bccpac.bc.ca/SPC/acct\\_cycle.htm](http://www.bccpac.bc.ca/SPC/acct_cycle.htm)
- The Accountability Framework—how it works in BC's public schools. [www.bccpac.bc.ca/SPC/acct\\_htm](http://www.bccpac.bc.ca/SPC/acct_htm)
- Accountability Framework—Policy Document. [www/bced/gpv/bc/ca/policy/policies/accountability\\_framework.htm](http://www/bced/gpv/bc/ca/policy/policies/accountability_framework.htm)
- District Accountability Contract Guidelines. [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/schools/sdinfo/acc\\_contracts](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/schools/sdinfo/acc_contracts)

**Anti-racism Toolkit Activity Set. Educational Activities for Use in Workshops and Classrooms.** Eric D. Wong. First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2002 [www.fnesc.ca/publications](http://www.fnesc.ca/publications)

**Association for Community Education in BC (ACEbc)** The association is dedicated to fostering and promoting Community Education and Community Schools in British Columbia. [www.acebc.org](http://www.acebc.org)

**Autism Society of British Columbia:** promotes understanding, acceptance, and full community inclusion for people with autism in British Columbia while providing support for the realization of the rights and informed choices of individuals with autism and their families. 303 - 3701 East Hastings Street, Burnaby, BC V5C 2H6 Tel: 604.434.0880 Toll Free: 1.888.437.0880 Fax: 604.434.0801 [www.autismbc.ca](http://www.autismbc.ca)

**BC College of Teachers (BCCT):** is the professional self-regulatory body for more than 65,000 licensed educators in British Columbia. 400 - 2025 West Broadway, Vancouver, BC V6J 1Z6 Tel 604.731.8170 toll-free 1.800.555.3684 [www.bcct.ca](http://www.bcct.ca)

**The BCCPAC Advocacy Project:** More information is available on the BCCPAC website. Go to [www.bccpac.bc.ca](http://www.bccpac.bc.ca). If there are no DPAC-appointed advocates in the school district, call the toll free message line 1-888-351-9834 for help.

**BCCPAC Publications:**

- Call it Safe: A parent guide to dealing with bullying in elementary schools
- Call it Safe: A parent guide to dealing with harassment and intimidation in secondary schools.
  - Available on the BCCPAC website at [www.bccpac.bc.ca](http://www.bccpac.bc.ca) or on the Ministry of Education website: [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/pubs.htm](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/pubs.htm)
- Our Voice: News magazine for parents, PACs and DPACs published three times a year
- BCCPAC Leadership Manual For School and District Parent Advisory Councils
- Speaking Up! A parent guide for advocating for students in public schools

**The BC Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect:** Available online at the Ministry of Children and Family Development website: [http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/child\\_protection/child\\_abuse\\_handbook/1toc.htm](http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/child_protection/child_abuse_handbook/1toc.htm)

While intended for service providers, the handbook has valuable information about emotional abuse and emotional harm. Parents should understand that while some actions by staff may not be emotional abuse by definition, it may still be very important to improve the way their child is treated.

**BC Human Rights Tribunal:** If you have a complaint about discrimination under the BC Human Rights Code, you may complain to the BC Human Rights Tribunal. Discrimination complaints can only be made on certain grounds. You can find more information at [www.bchrcoalition.org](http://www.bchrcoalition.org) or [www.bchrt.bc.ca](http://www.bchrt.bc.ca).

**BC Safe Schools Strategy—Safe, Caring and Orderly Schools:**  
[www.bced.gov.bc.ca/sco](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/sco)

**BC School Trustees Association:** The website has information of interest about public school issues, trusteeship, legislation, etc. [www.bcsta.org](http://www.bcsta.org)

**BCTF Presentations for Parents June 2005:** Offered to parent groups at no charge; parent groups arrange suitable location for presentation. Presentations available: Supporting Your Child's Learning; Antibullying; Raising Confident Boys (and Girls) [www.bctf.ca/parents/presentations](http://www.bctf.ca/parents/presentations)

**Canadian Parents for French (CPF) - British Columbia & Yukon:** The provincial branch of CPF is composed of individuals and families dedicated to the promotion and creation of French Second Language (FSL) learning opportunities for young Canadians. CPF provides support, information and resources for parents with children in the French Immersion or French as a Second Language (FSL/Core French) programs. [www.cpf.bc.ca](http://www.cpf.bc.ca)

**Child and Youth Officer for BC:** The Child and Youth Officer provides advocacy support for children and youth in care who are having difficulty speaking up for their rights under section 70 of the Child, Family and Community Service Act. Children and youth in care must be informed of their right to contact the Child and Youth Officer. Phone toll free: 1-800-476-3933; In Victoria: 356-0831. [www.gov.bc.ca/cyo](http://www.gov.bc.ca/cyo).

**Difficult Conversations. How to Discuss What Matters Most:**

By Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, Sheila Heen of the Harvard Negotiation Project. The book may be available in the local library or can be ordered through a local bookstore or online.

**District Review Guide:** [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/review/reviewguide.pdf](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/review/reviewguide.pdf)

**Diversity in BC Schools: A Framework:** Ministry of Education 2004 [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/diversity/diversity\\_framework.pdf](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/diversity/diversity_framework.pdf)

**Enquiry BC:** Call for assistance in directing phone enquiries to the correct ministry or government organization. Available 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday. Email: [EnquiryBC@gems3.gov.bc.ca](mailto:EnquiryBC@gems3.gov.bc.ca)

In Victoria: (250) 387-6121

In Vancouver: (604) 660-2421

Elsewhere in BC: toll free 1-800-663-7867

Telephone Device for the Deaf (TDD):

In Vancouver: (604) 775-0303

Elsewhere: toll free 1-800-661-8773

**First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC):** FNESC facilitates discussion about education matters affecting First Nations in BC by providing information and asking for input from First Nations. This site website provides information about FNESC and its activities, programs, upcoming events and publications. [www.fnesc.ca](http://www.fnesc.ca)

**Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA):**

If you have difficulty accessing your child's personal information, you can call the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner for BC for information on how to make a complaint. The office does not accept complaints by email. Call Enquiry BC and ask for (250) 387-5629 or visit the website at [www.oipc.bc.ca](http://www.oipc.bc.ca) PO Box 9038 Stn Prov Govt, Victoria, BC V8W 9A4

**Learning Disabilities Association of BC.** Visit the LDA Canada website [www.ldac-taac.ca](http://www.ldac-taac.ca) for chapters. Know Your Rights is a guide for parents of children with Learning Disabilities and/or AD/HD. Published by the Learning Disabilities Association—South Vancouver Island, the guide includes a youth version and is available on-line at [www.knowyourrights.ca](http://www.knowyourrights.ca).

**Ministry of Education Publications.** [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/pubs.htm](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/pubs.htm).

Ready, Set, Learn

Math for Families

Reading for Families

Writing for Families

Helping Your Child Learn Kindergarten to Grade 3

Helping Your Child Learn Grades 4-7

Helping Your Child Learn Grades 8-9

Grad Planner Grades 10-12

Manual of School Law: Includes the *School Act*, *Teaching Profession Act*, *Independent School Act* and related regulations and orders

Safe, Caring & Orderly Schools

Focus on Suspension (1998)

**Special Education**

Parents' Guide to Individual Education Planning (IEP)

Special Education Services: A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines

Teaching Students with Autism

Teaching Students with Learning and Behavioural Differences

Teaching Students with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

Teaching Students with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Effects

Gifted Education

**Office of the Ombudsman:** The Ombudsman receives inquiries and complaints about the practices and services provided by public bodies. The Ombudsman may investigate to determine if the public body is being fair to the people it serves. If people are not sure whether their complaint falls within the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman, they can ask in person: Second Floor, 756 Fort Street, Victoria; by mail: PO Box 9039 Stn Prov Govt, Victoria, B.C. V8W 9A5; by phone 1-800-567-3247 (all of B.C.); 387-5855 or through the website. [www.ombudsman.bc.ca](http://www.ombudsman.bc.ca)

**Performance standards:** [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/perf\\_stands](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/perf_stands)

**Public libraries:** Many publications produced by the provincial government and other organizations may only be available on their websites. The public library may have computers with internet connections that are available for community members to use.

**School Planning Councils:**

[www.bccpac.bc.ca/SPC](http://www.bccpac.bc.ca/SPC)

Information, Guidelines, Resources, Research & Reports, legislation and policy. [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/spc](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/spc)

**Roles and Responsibilities of Teachers and Teacher Assistants.**

A BCTF/CUPE Joint Paper

<http://www.bctf.ca/education/InclusiveEd/TeacherTA-Roles/>

**School Act:** available online at [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/legislation/schoollaw](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/legislation/schoollaw)

**Vancouver Multicultural Society:** Advances cross-cultural understanding and harmony through education, participation, advocacy and public policy evaluation. [www.urbancultures.ca](http://www.urbancultures.ca)

**Volunteers and the Law:** A guide for volunteers, organizations and boards. 2000 Edition. Outlines the responsibilities of volunteers and how the law applies to volunteers. This can be downloaded free of charge from the People's Law School and Volunteer Vancouver websites. [www.volunteervancouver.ca](http://www.volunteervancouver.ca)

**Volunteer Vancouver:** inspires and builds leadership in the voluntary sector. #301-3102 Main St. Vancouver, BC V5T 3G7 Tel. 604.875.9144 Fax 604.875.0710 [www.volunteervancouver.ca](http://www.volunteervancouver.ca)





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[www.fnesc.ca/publications](http://www.fnesc.ca/publications)





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