



SCHOOL DISTRICT 5

S O U T H E A S T K O O T E N A Y

November 3rd, 2017

Hon. Rob Fleming
Minister of Education
1020 Hillside Ave
Victoria, BC V8T 2A3

Dear Hon. Minister Fleming:

RE: Foundation Skills Assessment

At the October 10th School District 5 (SD5), Southeast Kootenay public Board meeting, the following motion was carried:

That the Board endorse the letter dated September 22, 2017 to the Board from Cranbrook and Fernie Teacher's Association regarding Foundation Skills Assessment and that the Board send a letter to the Ministry of Education in support of this letter.

Our Board is equally concerned with the issues outlined in the Cranbrook and Fernie Teachers' Association (CFTA) letter, especially the highly unethical manner in which the Fraser Institute is able to simplify the data generated by these standardized tests and publicize the "results" by school.

As you are aware, stakeholder concerns regarding the FSA have been discussed, and expressed to the previous government, as members of the Advisory Groups on Provincial Assessment (AGPA), as well as individually, since the introduction of the FSA.

In June, 2014, Deans of Education, Kris Magnusson and Blye Frank submitted a final report on behalf of the AGPA, and the organizations that comprise the AGPA; the BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC), BC Council of Administrators of Special Education (BCCASE), BC Superintendents' Association (BCSA), BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF), First Nations' Education

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Steering Committee (FNESC), Office of the Representative for Children and Youth (RCY), BC and others, pointing out that past provincial assessments have been misinterpreted and that there is need for "...assessment within the educational system [to] be performed in an ethical, equitable and consistent manner."

Teachers, and other stakeholders believe the public ranking of FSAs do harm to students, schools and public education. Over the past decade, prior Ministers of Education have been asked to discard the FSA, or at least administer it on a random, sample basis so that neither students nor schools can be identified.

There is no proof that "when all students write the assessment, parents, teachers, schools and the province receive accurate information on how students are learning". Conversely, random sampling has been the standard international education assessment method for a number of years and *has been proven to be statistically sound*.

In addition to the unethical interpretation and use of FSA results, parents in our District wonder why the regular curriculum test, and exams are not enough to evaluate their child's progress; especially given that the FSA results are not used to calculate report card grades or to diagnose learning problems. Neither do "lower school scores" result in additional resources for that school. The FSA does however result in the overall loss of valuable time and precious teaching and learning opportunities within our schools.

Our Board would also like the Ministry of Education (MoE) to consider that the MoE and educational partners have dedicated many years of research and expertise and have expended considerable financial resources in order to revise the BC curriculum so that "students can succeed in the 21st Century". Yet, *standardized* testing cannot adequately capture or reflect personalized learning (*the focus of the revised curriculum*), due to its inherently oppositional structure; Personalized learning requires students to learn "by exploring their interests and passions" and then demonstrating understanding in uniquely personal ways, while standardized tests encourage and reflect "boiler-plate" learning.

Our Board has been encouraged by *your* prior comments, Minister Fleming, as education critic to the previous government, regarding the unfairness of ranking schools and the negative implications this has for the K-12 education system. It is our hope that, under your leadership as Education Minister, the FSA –and the public ranking of educational assessments—will be replaced with valuation methods that reflect and assist the innovative revised curriculum teaching and learning practices our District continues to embrace.

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We look forward to your timely response to our concerns regarding the Ministry's current standardized method for testing the foundational skills of students.

Sincerely,



Frank Lento, Board Chair,
SD5

Cc*: John Horgan, Premier, BC New Democratic Party
Andrew Weaver, Leader, Green Party
Mike De Jong, House Leader, Liberal Party
Tom Shypitka, MLA Kootenay East BC
Mary Polak and Dan Davies, Education Critics, BC Liberal Party
Gordon Swan, President, BCSTA
BCSTA for distribution to member Boards of Education
Vancouver School Board
Glen Hansman, President BC Teachers' Federation
Jen Mezei, President, BCCPAC
Shelley Balfour & Chris Kielinski, CFTA Co-Chairs
Debbie Therrien, DPAC Chair
Aaron Thorn, President, SD5 Administrators' Association
Charley Beresford, Columbia Institute
Catherine Shaw, FACE BC Vancouver
Summit 107 Radio
Drive 102.9/B104 Radio
Black Press
Black Rock News
Cranbrook Daily Townsman
Elk Valley Herald
e-know Online News
Fernie Free Press

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