



APR 23 2010

Ref: 138153

Ann Whiteaker, President
BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils
350-5172 Kingsway
Burnaby BC V5H 2E8

Dear Ms. Whiteaker:

It was a pleasure joining you at your Spring Annual General Meeting (AGM) on April 16, 2010. I enjoyed hearing the views of parents who are passionate about their children's education.

Further to your letter dated January 25, 2010, I am also pleased to respond to your resolutions regarding the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) passed at the fall 2009 BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC) AGM.

As you and your members are likely aware, the Province is committed to student achievement and an important part of supporting students is measuring how they are doing in foundational skills such as reading, writing, and numeracy. Assessing students in these areas gives parents and educators valuable information so that early interventions can be made.

The Province is not engaged in ranking schools—our focus is on meeting the unique and diverse needs of students. An independent third party ranks schools using the FSA results, which is publically accessible information governed by Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. This statute determines what must be made available in the public interest and what can be withheld in the interest of the privacy of an individual. However, I am always open to suggestions on how we might provide additional context to the FSA data and better meet the needs of parents, teachers, trustees, and administrators.

It is important for all students to take part in assessments so that schools, districts and the Province have an accurate and reliable picture of performance. The Student Learning Assessment Order (www.bced.gov.bc.ca/legislation/schoollaw/e/m60-94.pdf) was established to carry out duties within the *School Act*. The order describes processes for assessing the effectiveness of educational programs and measuring individual or aggregate student progress. Assessment is part of the overall learning process and is required under the law.

Schools, districts, and the Province use many tools and measures. The FSA is one tool that can assist with monitoring performance of individuals or groups of students. Superintendents of Achievement from the Ministry routinely meet with district Superintendents to review results and discuss how best to support and enable the success of all students.

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As Minister of Education, it is my responsibility to balance the views of teachers, parents, trustees and administrators on important educational areas such as provincial assessment. I welcome dialogue and open discussion with all educational stakeholders on assessment and student learning and would be happy to discuss the FSA and how it can be improved.

Thank you for sharing your members views with me

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Margaret Q". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Margaret MacDiarmid
Minister