



# SCHOOL DISTRICT 5

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

October 15, 2018

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

Dear Hon. Minister Fleming:

RE: Foundation Skills Assessment

On November 3rd, 2017, School District 5 (SD5) Board of Trustees sent you a letter endorsing the September 22, 2017 letter sent to you from the Cranbrook and Fernie Teacher's Association (CFTA) regarding Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA).

Our Board received a response letter, dated December 29, 2017, from Deputy Minister Keith Godin confirming that the Ministry of Education (MoE) had received similar correspondence from other Boards. He also provided his assurance that the MoE was taking this issue seriously and was committed to working with all British Columbia partner groups to address the issues outlined in these letters.

In his letter, Deputy Minister Godin stated that the Ministry's approach with regard to the collection, use and release of the FSA "must be well informed and proactive". He outlined the first step to this approach as an analysis of the legal framework of collection and release of FSA information as it relates to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA), a review of policy, technical and program design and the identification of constraints and opportunities.

As you may imagine, our Board was therefore surprised and disappointed to learn – almost a year following receipt of this letter—that the FSA would be once again be used as a measurement tool in the District's newest Framework For Enhancing Student Learning.

Following a presentation to the Board at their October 9th, 2018 public Board meeting on this Framework document, the Board carried the following motion:

*That the Board write a letter articulating our continued opposition to the FSA on a province-wide basis for all students in grades 4 and 7.*

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Our Board understands that the FSA will now be conducted toward the beginning, rather than the end of the school year. We assume this change was made for the purpose of negating 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.

However, this change does not address a number of other concerns our Board, and other stakeholder groups have with the FSA, as outlined in our letter of November 3rd, 2017:

- According to the final report of the Advisory Group on Provincial Assessment (AGPA) 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.”
- Random sampling has been the **standard** international education assessment method for many years and has been **proven** to be **statistically sound**.
- There is **zero** proof that when all students write an assessment, parents, teachers, schools and the province receive accurate information on how students are learning.
- FSA results are **not** used to calculate report card grades.
- FSA results are **not** used to diagnose learning problems.
- Lower overall FSA scores for a specific school does **not** result in additional funding or resources for that school.
- Teaching to and/or administering the FSA consumes valuable time and precious teaching and learning opportunities within our schools.
- The MoE and stakeholders have expended years of research and expertise and 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.

Over the past decade, prior Ministers of Education have been asked to –at the very least—administer the FSA on a random, sample basis. Given the overwhelming rationale outlined above, our Board does not understand why this approach has not been considered, especially given your prior comments, Minister Fleming, as education critic

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to the previous government, regarding the unfairness of ranking schools and the negative implications this has for the public K-12 education system.

It is still our hope that, under your leadership as Education Minister, the FSA will be replaced with randomized testing, and eventually with valuation methods that **reflect and assist** the innovative revised curriculum teaching and learning practices our District continues to embrace.

Once again 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, BC Green Party  
Andrew Wilkinson, Leader, BC 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  
Glen Hansman, President BC Teachers' Federation  
Jen Mezei, President, BCCPAC  
Shelley Balfour & Chris Kielpinski, CFTA Co-Chairs  
Tara McKee, DPAC Chair  
Aaron Thorn, President, SD5 Administrators' Association  
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

\*This correspondence is public and transparent. Please feel free to share and/or respond with comment.

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