



A parent guide
to advocating for students
in public schools



What is "advocacy"?

Advocacy is described as speaking up in support of yourself or others.

As a parent:

You are your child's natural advocate.

You can make sure your child's rights, needs and opinions are respected.

You can help make sure that decisions affecting your child are made fairly.

Advocacy in public schools upholds the principles found in 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

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.

Statement of Education Policy Order
BC Ministry of Education

You have the right to volunteer at or for the school subject to certain rules.

When dealing with the school system, you can take someone to support you. For example, you can take your spouse, partner, a trusted friend or someone from your PAC or district parent advisory council (DPAC).

You, along with your child, are liable if your child intentionally or negligently loses, damages, destroys or converts property owned by the board.

Parents and students rights and responsibilities exist within the context of the rights and responsibilities of others involved in the public school system. These are found in the different pieces of legislation that govern the BC public education system and affirm our rights and responsibilities as citizens.

Helping students help themselves

Our young people have many skills, including the ability to tell us what they need and want.

Most young people will tell us what is happening in their lives if we are willing to listen! We can support our children as they learn to speak up respectfully on their own.

Self-advocacy, being able to speak on your own behalf, is an important life skill.

For students to be effective as self-advocates, parents and all other adults need to accept a child's right to be treated with respect and dignity.

Adults also need to accept that children have the right to have their views carefully considered when decisions are made about them.

Children need to be safe emotionally and physically. When something goes wrong at school, they need to know who they can trust and who they can turn to for support both inside and outside the school.

What are a student's rights and responsibilities?

Children also have rights and responsibilities that can be found in law and policy.

They have the right and the responsibility to participate in an educational program.

They have the right to receive an educational program in English.

They have the right to receive instruction in a language other than English if their parents have the right under Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

They may enroll in an educational program in any school if space and facilities are available at the school where the program is provided.

They have the right, in most instances, to receive free of charge instruction and resources necessary to participate in an educational program. Where fees may be charged, the board of education must have a policy that supports participation for students in financial need.

They must comply with school rules and with the code of conduct and other rules and policies of the school board.

They can consult with a teacher, principal, vice principal or director of instruction about their educational program.

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 a 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.

Statement of Education Policy Order
BC Ministry of Education



Sometimes when students face problems they don't know how to solve, they become frustrated. It is important for schools to work with all students to develop processes for student problem-solving. Students need to be made aware of those processes, and staff need to support them. For students to successfully speak up for themselves, adults need to help them raise their concerns and commit to hearing them out when they do.

They can examine their own student records while accompanied by the principal or someone designated by the principal who can help them understand what the records mean. Students can request a copy of their own records, but they may have to pay a fee.

They have the right to receive an educational program when suspended.

They are liable, along with their parents, if they intentionally or negligently lose, destroy, damage or convert property owned by the school board.

They can appeal a decision of an employee of the board of education if it significantly affects their education, health or safety. An employee's failure to make a decision can also be appealed.

They can, in some circumstances, appeal the board's decision to a Superintendent of Achievement.

They have the right, if they are a student with special needs, to receive an educational program in a classroom with other students who do not have special needs, unless the educational needs of that student, or other students, indicate that the student's educational program should be provided otherwise.

If they are in Grades 10-12 and receiving instruction through distributed learning, they can enroll in one or more educational programs.

When we advocate for our children,
we model problem-solving skills.

Educators in schools and school districts make decisions every day.

They make decisions within a legal framework set out by the provincial legislature, the local board of education and, where appropriate, the school. Some decisions directly affect your child. Other decisions may affect a large number of children and may or may not directly affect your child.

Educators have the responsibility to make decisions. They also have the responsibility to involve you when they make decisions, or are about to make decisions, that directly affect your child. Decision-makers in public services like schools and school districts have to be fair to the people they serve. Therefore, the people in schools and districts who make decisions that affect children must follow the principles of administrative fairness.

The Ombudsman describes what administrative fairness means in the 1995

Professional judgment in decision-making



For more about the structure of public education in BC, see [An overview of the public school system](#) on page 35.



The BCCPAC Advocacy Project uses the term •administrative fairnessŽ from the Office of the Ombudsman’s report [Fair Schools](#). You may also hear the requirement for fair treatment by public services called •procedural fairnessŽ, •administrative justiceŽ or •natural justiceŽ.

Educators rarely make decisions based solely on law or a parent’s or child’s rights.

They also use their professional judgment to help make decisions. When educators use their professional judgment, they:

Draw on their education, knowledge and experience.

Consider the rights and responsibilities of others that may be affected by the decision.

Consider the needs of the child.

Consider other information necessary to make a good decision.

Can describe to parents (and others when necessary) how and why the information was used to make the decision.

When educators do not explain their professional judgment, problems can arise. Parents are more likely to support an educator’s decision when they can see the principles of administrative fairness in the decision-making process.

They understand the decision to be made.

Their views are considered and reflected in the decision.

They can see how their child’s needs are supported.

Their views are sought and considered in any follow-up or change in the decision.

You can give information that helps educators understand your child’s needs. Use your knowledge of what works for your child to help educators make a decision that supports your child’s best interests.

What you can do to help your child

Decide when to get involved

When something is happening at school that is affecting your child, you may need to get involved. For example, when:

Your child is complaining of being poorly treated, or not wanting to go to school.

You are concerned about your child's progress in an educational program.

You see signs of changed behaviour.

It is also best to get involved before a decision is made that affects your child.

For example, when you believe a decision is going to be made about your child on such things as:

Placement or participation in a special education program.

Counselling.

Adjudication procedures for provincial exams.

Use the Self-Help Guides •Problem-SolvingŽ and •Meeting SurvivalŽ on pages 21-24 to help you.

Listen to your child

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

Make it safe for your child to share thoughts and opinions.

Remember that children aren't always ready to talk when we are, so try to be available when they are.

Ask questions in a way that draws more from your child than a "Yes" or "No."

Are you able to listen even when you don't like what you hear?

Are you respectful?

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. Make sure you talk with your child and agree on what needs to be done.



Take notes using your child's words to describe what is happening for your child.

Use the notes to help you put your concerns in writing.

Children have the right to be and feel safe.

Parents have the primary responsibility for the emotional and physical safety of their children. School staff share that responsibility when children are involved in school activities.

Mistreatment of children is not okay. While some mistreatment is not considered "abuse," any mistreatment of children is serious and needs to be dealt with. Parents are encouraged to find more information to help them stop mistreatment from continuing.

For more information on bullying/harassment and intimidation, please see **Call it safe** on page 20.

Identify the problem

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

The following tips and the Self-Help Guides "Problem-Solving" and "Meeting Survival" on pages 21-24 will help you.

What information do you need to solve the problem?

Do you understand how to use your district's complaints process?

Who do you need to talk with to help solve this problem?

Do you need a meeting? Think about who you need to meet with.

Write down the concerns you want to talk about.

Write down the information you need to give them, for example, information about your child's learning, health or emotional needs.

Some other things to think about before you decide to put it in writing are:

Who you are sending it to.

Why you are sending it.

What response you are hoping for.

Whether your letter is fair, respectful and reasonable.

Whether you are working within your district's process.



Always keep focused on your child and how the problem can be solved in a way that meets your child's needs. When everyone focuses on solving the problem for the student, fewer adult conflicts arise.

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.

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.

There are different ways to get in touch with the people you want to meet with. The school secretary may be able to tell you the

Decide whether you need a meeting

Often one good meeting with the people who have the ability to help solve the problem replaces the need for many phone calls or emails. Many people find it easier to talk face-to-face, but struggle when they talk on the phone or try to write an e-mail. A meeting that includes the right people can be helpful in finding solutions and developing a plan. Whether you ask for the meeting or are called to one, the Self-Help Guide *Meeting Survival* on page 23 has more information to help you plan for a successful meeting.

Should your child be there?

Parents often wonder if they should include their child in a meeting with school staff. While it is important to include your child wherever possible, here are a few things to think about:

Will this be a positive place for your child?

Will it be best for the adults to meet first?

Will your child be able to understand what is happening and take part in the meeting?

Will your child feel okay about going to the meeting?

Set up a meeting

Once you know who to talk with, call them to set up a meeting.

Let them know what you want to discuss.

Let them know if someone is coming to the meeting with you.

Let them know if your child is coming.

Ask if anyone else should attend and why.

If you are asked to attend a meeting by the school or district, don't be afraid to ask questions.

What will be discussed?

Who else will be there and what is their role?

Is there any information you need to provide to them?

What information do you need before the meeting to help you prepare?

Who can provide you with the information?

Will any decisions be made in this meeting?

How will your views be reflected in any decisions made?

If you are given new information at the meeting, let them know you need time to read and/or think about it. Ask how the new information will be used.

In the meeting

It can be helpful to start with something positive.

Recognize what is already working well.

Will an apology help?

If the Ombudsman believes a public agency has treated a person unfairly, the Ombudsman may recommend that the agency apologize to the person. Complaints have been settled as a result of a sincere apology for a mistake or wrongdoing from a public service employee.

The Power of an Apology:
Removing the Legal Barriers.
A Special Report by the Ombudsman of
the Province of British Columbia
February, 2006

Many parents ask for an apology.

An apology says that a mistake was made. It can help restore dignity and trust, mend damaged relationships and let everyone move forward.

You may remember a time when you received an apology, but you felt something was missing & you still felt concerned. Perhaps the person didn't seem truly sorry or you felt you needed to hear something more. Before you ask for an apology on behalf of yourself or your child, think about what you need from the apology.

Depending on your situation, you may find that you need the person or people to do one or more of the following:

Recognize that what they did was unacceptable or hurtful in some way & no excuses, no disclaimers, no blaming.

Recognize that what they did created harm and to show that they are truly sorry.

Be willing to heal the harm & sometimes there are specific actions that can make things better.

Make a commitment that they won't repeat the mistake.

How to ask for an apology

Before you meet, organize your thoughts and feelings about the situation. Plan what you will say to prompt the person to respond to the parts of the apology necessary to meet your needs. The person is less likely to dismiss your request with a quick "Sorry" if you are prepared.

The following is an example of how to say what you need to encourage the person to apologize:

Seek recognition from the person something happened that was wrong.

Describe the person's actions.

"I need you to recognize that it was inappropriate when you yelled at my son and told him his work was garbage. It was even worse that you yelled at him in front of the class."

Seek understanding of the harm created by the wrongful act.

Describe what happened as a result of the person's action. Sometimes people try to excuse themselves by saying they didn't mean to hurt anyone, or that that they were "only joking."

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"I need you to understand that what you did has harmed him. He used to respect you and enjoy your class. Now his classmates are teasing him, and he feels you are encouraging them. He no longer feels safe in your class and does not want to attend. He was embarrassed and humiliated in front of his peers."

Seek willingness, where possible, to heal the harm.

Explain what you need from the person to make things better.

"You could help fix this problem by letting my son know your actions were unacceptable. He needs to know that you care, and you did not intend to hurt him."

Seek commitment to not repeat the act.

"It is important to me and my son to know that you will not humiliate and embarrass him again. You need to let my son know that if you have a problem with his work or behaviour, you will deal with it respectfully."

Next steps

Sometimes a person is truly remorseful, assures you that it won't happen again, and it doesn't. Other times a person may show a pattern of poor behaviour. If an apology does not solve the problem, you may want to speak to the person again or take the next step in your school district's complaints process.

When a parent acts poorly

If you have acted poorly in a situation involving your child, the steps above can help you recognize when and how to make an apology. An apology helps everyone refocus attention on supporting the best interests of your child.



BC's Apology Act

The Province of BC also recognizes the importance of apologies. In the **Apology Act** an apology means "an expression of sympathy or regret, a statement that one is sorry or any other words or actions indicating contrition or commiseration, whether or not the words or actions admit or imply an admission of fault in connection with the matter to which the words or actions relate." The act covers apologies in civil disputes and says that the evidence of an apology is not admissible in any court as evidence of the fault or liability of the person in connection with the matter.

Parents often fear that if they try to deal with a problem, the person they are complaining about will take it out on their children.

For the same reason, students often don't want their parents to raise concerns. Unfortunately, the fear of "retribution" can stop people from dealing with problems.

Talking with someone about whether they are going to act differently toward your child because of something you've said or done is difficult.

If you or your child are concerned your actions will make things worse, the following approach will help:

- Raise your concern at a meeting.

- Try to reach agreement on your main problem first.

- Whether or not your main Raise your conc Tf 11 0 0 1lae28 Tm /Cs8 cs 0..68

Call it safe

Children have the right to be physically and emotionally safe at school.

Parents are often worried about the effectiveness of a school response when their children are affected by, or involved in, bullying or harassment. In secondary school, bullying is often referred to as harassment and intimidation.

Children can at times be targets for bullies, and at other times, they can take part in bullying others.

Bullying can happen both inside and outside the school community. Many educators, parents and other community members are concerned how students' access to technology can rapidly fuel a bullying incident. Cyber-bullying happens almost effortlessly with text-messaging, social networking sites, e-mail, and other methods. Its effect spills over into the school causing serious harm to the targeted students and the school culture. Parents and educators need to work together to respond quickly and effectively.

Signs of bullying

Some children will tell you if they are being bullied. Others will not talk about bullying because they may believe there is no one to help them. Children may also think that if they report, the adults will make the situation worse. They worry that adults cannot protect them. Some children who are bullied feel that it is their fault, or that if they tell, they will be labelled and sent for counselling. While children may not tell you, they often show signs that something is not right in their lives.

Is your child:

Avoiding going to school?

Taking a different route to school?

Avoiding taking the bus?

Complaining of stomach-aches or headaches?

Upset by phone calls, text messages, or after being on the computer?

Avoiding others?

Missing personal possessions?

Missing money?

If your child is being bullied, harassed or intimidated, it is important to act immediately. Seemingly small incidents can build quickly, and many more children can become involved in the behaviour.

Note details such as:

- Who you contacted.
- When you contacted them.
- How? letter, telephone, fax, email, etc.
- What was said?

Meeting Survival

Be wiser than other people, if you can, but do not tell them so.

Lord Chesterfield

Note details such as:

- Who is setting the agenda?
- How do I add topics?
- What is the meeting to accomplish?
- How much time do we have?
- Who is attending?
 - What is their role in the meeting?
 - How are they involved with my child?
 - What are their rights and responsibilities?
- Will a decision be made at this meeting?
 - Who are the decision-makers?
 - Will I have a say in the decision?
- What is my role in the meeting?
- Do I need more information on my child's:
 - Education goals?
 - Education activities?
 - Specific behaviours?
- What information do I have to support a good decision?
 - What questions do I want to ask?
 - What works well for my child?
 - What doesn't work well for my child?
 - What other concerns do I have to share?
- Are others looking to me for specific information on my child's:
 - Learning needs?
 - Emotional needs?
 - Health?
 - Safety?

The topic of the meeting is:

Note who will be attending the meeting:

I want to accomplish:

The information I need to participate effectively:

What resources might help me prepare for the meeting?

€ BCCPAC Speaking UpA parent guide to advocating for students in public schoolsŽ

€ BC College of Teachers Standards

€

It is important to act swiftly if you think your child is unsafe. If your child is

Ask what the school can do to keep your child safe

Children need to be able to trust that the adults they turn to inside the system will respond in a positive way. If the school says it will develop a plan to keep your child safe, ask:

To be involved in developing the plan.

Whether you will be called every time bullying happens.

If the plan includes naming a person your child can turn to when needed, ask the person to assure your child that:

Reporting was the right thing to do.

Your child's concern will be shared with only the relevant people.

Your child will be kept safe.

Sometimes, as part of the plan, staff suggest that a meeting between your child and the other child is appropriate. Many children do not feel safe meeting with a child who most likely has harmed them more than once. They do not believe that what may be settled in the meeting in front of adults will necessarily remain settled once the adults are out of sight. Your child should be able to decide whether to meet with the other child.

If your child meets with the other child, ask staff for their follow-up plan to ensure your child's safety after the meeting.

Ask staff what their next steps are if the bullying continues.

Whether your child is the target, the bully or the bystander, counselling may be suggested. Ask:

What is the intent of the counselling?

Who will counsel your child and how are they qualified?

How often will the counselling take place?

What will be in place to support your child's missed learning?

Will your child be counselled individually or as part of a group?

What information will be shared with you following counselling?

When your child bullies another

the school code of conduct. The school may consider a range of consequences

Whatever the problem, if it remains unsolved...

A child's problem is best solved when the people closest to the problem work together to find a solution.

But what can you do, if in spite of your best efforts, your child's problem is not solved at the school? You can continue to the next level in your school district's process for problem-solving (see page 11). It will tell you the next person to talk to.



Where can I get a copy of my school district appeal information? Your school and school district office have copies. Most districts post the information on the district website. Some PACs or DPACs may have copies. Always make sure you have the most recent version.

Appeal to the board of education

If you have completed your school district's problem-solving process, and you have not received a decision or you disagree with a decision, you may be able to appeal to the board of education.

Section 11 of the School Act gives parents and/or students the right to ask the board of education to review decisions that school employees make, or fail to make, that significantly affects the education, health or safety of a student. Every district must have appeal procedures. The procedures describe the steps in an appeal.

Boards often include the kinds of problems that are considered to significantly affect the education, health or safety of a student. Student suspensions and placement in an educational program are examples of the kinds of decisions included in board appeal bylaws.

Appeal procedures do not look the same in every school district. There will 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 go with it. If you have used the Self-Help Guides on pages 21-24 and documented your actions and responses as well as those of the employees you have dealt with, you should have the information you need for an appeal to the board.

The board must be fair in its appeal procedures (See page 8). 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, such as:

Who will be there?

Will there be a chance to ask questions of others?

How much time do you have to present your information?

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Staff in the SAB can explain the appeal process and will check your paperwork for completeness. They must remain impartial, so they cannot help you to write your appeal. If you have trouble filling out forms, communicating in writing or orally, you will be responsible for finding someone to help you. The SAB may be able to give you information about resources available in your community.

The board of education will receive a copy of your Notice of Appeal and has the chance to respond using the Board of Education Response form. You will receive a copy of the board's response. The Office of the Registrar will ensure that both parties receive all of each other's information throughout the appeal.

Mediation

The SOA makes the final decision to refer your appeal to mediation. If you think mediation will not be appropriate, you will need to explain why when you submit your Notice of Appeal.

If your appeal goes to mediation, staff in the SAB work with you and the board of education to choose a mediator from the branch's list of mediators. The list includes mediators from around the province. The mediator is not a decision-maker. The mediator helps all parties work together to solve the matter. All parties must agree to the solution. If the parties do not agree to solution, the SOA will refer the matter to adjudication. If the parties agree to settle parts of the matter, the SOA will refer the parts that aren't settled to adjudication.

Adjudication

If your appeal goes to adjudication, it is considered a new hearing and therefore evidence is heard from both parties. The SAB chooses the adjudicator and arranges the adjudication process. Adjudication does not mean you will be guaranteed a chance to speak about your problem in person. The adjudicator may decide your appeal based on written submissions. If an oral hearing is required, the SAB staff will arrange the date, time and place of the hearing. The adjudicator has the power to dismiss all or part of the appeal. The adjudicator can also:

- Confirm or revoke the decision of the board of education.

- Change the decision.

- Refer the matter back to the board of education, with or without directions, to reconsider.

You and the board of education may continue to work together to try to settle your problem until the SOA or adjudicator has made a decision. Decisions of the SOAs and adjudicators are final and binding on both parties. If there has been an error in fact or law, one or both parties may seek a judicial review of the decision, but this happens rarely.

Costs

While the Ministry of Education will cover the costs of mediation or adjudication, you will be responsible for the cost of travel and accommodation. If you decide you need legal representation, you will also be responsible for that cost. The board of education is responsible for its costs in the same areas. Mediation and adjudication proceedings will take place as close as possible to the parties.



Some boards of education offer mediation as a district problem-solving option.

The Ministry of Attorney General's Dispute Resolution Office website has information about mediation.

www.ag.gov.bc.ca/dro/mediation-in-bc/index.htm

While the guide does not specifically talk about mediation in public education, it has information about choosing mediation and key questions to ask mediators.

Appeal to a Superintendent of Achievement adapted from materials produced by the Student Appeals Branch, Ministry of Education

The college has its own process to review complaints from the public.

For more information:

Contact the Intake Officer at 604-731-8170

Toll free: 1-800-555-3684

E-mail: intake@bcct.ca

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy

You should be able to see information that is kept about you and your child except in specific instances as determined by the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA). This information is called a record. The principal, or someone chosen by the principal, must be there when you are reading the records, so they can explain what they mean. There is a law that directs how school districts and other public bodies collect, use and store information about the people they serve. If you think that information about you or your child is being withheld, you can request the information from the school district under the Act. Each school district appoints someone to deal with these requests. That person is called the Information and Privacy Coordinator. If you think information is being wrongfully withheld, you can ask the Information and Privacy Commissioner to review your request.

To contact the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner:

Call Enquiry BC and ask for (250) 387-5629 or visit the website at www.oipc.bc.ca for information about making complaints.

Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner for British Columbia
PO Box 9038, Stn. Prov. Govt.
Victoria, BC V8W 9A4

An overview of the public school system

It is helpful to have some information about the public school system as you start to work on your problem.

The provincial legislature has authority over the education system through the School Act. The legislation gives governance responsibility to the Minister of Education at the provincial level and to boards of education at the local level. BC is organized into 60 school districts, including the Conseil scolaire francophone. Each school district is run by a board of education. The board consists of people elected by local voters every three years to oversee educational programs in your school district. A school district can include the residents of many communities. The board of education is a corporate board; therefore all the statutory powers and duties reside with the board, not with individual trustees. The chairperson is elected by the trustees on the board. Each board is accountable to the province and the public for the performance of its students. The board of education, representing all residents in the school district, is the public's voice in public education.

The board of education is responsible, through its annual budget, for distributing funds to operate schools. Your school, depending on its size and student needs, may include teachers, teacher-librarians, teacher assistants, child care workers, counsellors, multi-cultural and Aboriginal support staff, clerical and custodial staff, a principal, vice-principal(s) and others.

The following is only a snapshot of the responsibilities of the various partners. You are encouraged to find out more information in your district or from the Ministry of Education website.

Ministry of Education

Board of Education

- Provides educational programs.
- Sets local policies for the effective and efficient operation of schools.
- Employs staff.
- Prepares and approves the school district's operating budget and capital plan.
- Distributes funds to schools.
- Approves locally-developed courses and resource materials.
- Makes policies about student conduct, discipline, suspension and attendance.
- Hears student and parent appeals.
- Approves annual school plans.
- Prepares the district achievement contract to improve student achievement.
- Prepares district literacy plans.
- Works with the community to support early learning and adult literacy.

School District Superintendent

- Reports to the board of education.
- Advises and assists board of education in exercising its duties under the School Act
- 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 the minister requires.

School Principal

- Is the person to whom teachers and other staff report.
- Is responsible for hiring staff.
- Administers and supervises the school.

Many school district websites provide a lot of helpful information. Sometimes it's hard to know where to look for what you need. For example, policies may be found in the part of the site called "Administration," "Parents" "Board of Education" or other. Some school districts may not provide all of their policies on-line. Other districts provide policies only on-line. Staff in your school district office or your local school trustees should be able to provide you with a printed copy if you need it. You can also search for policies on the BCSTA website www.bcsta.org. Always check with school district staff that the policy you find on-line is the most current version.

Exercises paramount authority in disciplining students 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.

Evaluates and writes reports on teachers.

Advises the superintendent and the board.

May be assisted by a vice-principal.

May teach in a classroom.

The Parent Advisory Council

The District Parent Advisory Council

Most school districts have a DPAC. The School Act allows PACs to form a DPAC to represent them to the board of education. Being part of a DPAC gives PACs the opportunity to meet and discuss what is happening throughout the district. DPACs also must have bylaws that govern their meetings and the business and conduct of their affairs.

The DPAC may advise the board of education on any matter relating to education in the district. DPAC members often sit on district committees where they represent parents' views. The DPAC may decide to belong to BCCPAC.

The BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils

Many PACs and DPACs join BCCPAC to ensure a parent voice at the provincial level. BCCPAC talks about parents' views to the leaders of the other provincial

The School Acts the legal framework for how the public school system operates.

Regulations, orders and policies must be consistent with the act. Boards of education have the authority to write policies for their districts. These policies, which may vary from district to district, must also be consistent with the act, regulations and orders. Public school legislation continues to evolve, leading

We just don't have space to list the many great resources now available. Of course, time passes, and resources disappear. We can only promise that the internet links below were live at the time of publication!

Administrative Justice Office

The website explains administrative justice and the purpose of administrative tribunals – what they are, how they work and why we have them. www.gov.bc.ca/ajo

British Columbia Centre for Safe Schools & Communities

A central source for information, resources, training, referrals and examples of successful practices addressing safe school and community issues. It serves youth, parents, educators, police and youth-serving community members throughout BC. For more information: Call toll free: 1-888-224-7233; Lower Mainland: (604) 870-5936;

BC Human Rights Commission (604) 766-0000 -1. Go to the website for more information.

Adaptations: An education program with adaptations retains the learning outcomes of the regular curriculum and is provided so the student can participate in the program. For example, adaptations may include alternate formats (such as Braille, books on tape), instructional strategies (such as use of interpreters, visual cues and aids) and assessment procedures (such as oral exams, additional time, assistive technologies).

Adjudication: Adjudication is a process where the Ministry of Education considers a school principal's request for permission to modify the administration of provincial examinations. The content of the exam is not modified. Adjudication is required when the student is unable to write the examinations as they are usually administered due to either "predictable" or "unpredictable" circumstances. More on adjudication and an explanation of those circumstances can be found at www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/ppandg/3_adjudication.htm.

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

CEA: Certified Education Assistant. They may also be called Special Education Assistants (SEA) or Teacher Assistants (TA).

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.

DL: "Distributed learning" means a method of instruction that relies primarily on indirect communication between



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Tell us what you think. We're always open to hearing ideas about how we can improve **Speaking Up**

About the BCCPAC Advocacy Project

The BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC) believes strongly that parents, with the right support and information, can make things better for their children in public schools.

The BCCPAC Advocacy Project focuses on helping parent leaders around the province support parents and students who want to solve the problems they are having in their public schools.

The Project, which began in 1994, is grounded in the 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, a report published in 1995 by the BC Office of the Ombudsman. We also look to 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 and the Ministry of Education to support the foundation for advocacy in BC's public school system.

Many DPACs in BC are part of the BCCPAC Advocacy Project. Contact a member of your DPAC Executive to find out more about your local project.

BCCPAC Advocacy Project toll free message line 1-888-351-9834

This Guide belongs to:

This resource is meant to provide basic information and is not intended to provide, or be a replacement for, legal advice or direction. Readers are responsible for seeking additional information and support from the appropriate sources. BCCPAC takes no responsibility for actions taken as a result of the information contained in this resource.

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